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ABSTRACT

This packet contains the four quarterly newsletters published by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit in England in 1988. The Winter issue contains the following articles: "Staff Accreditation"; "Afraid to Fail"; "Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Libraries: Potentials Realised"; and "Literacy Work with Local Employers." The Spring issue includes the following: "The Challenge of Change"; "Preparing for a Long Break"; "Competency Based ABE--A Lesson from America"; "Bilingual Publicity"; and "The Open College: An ABE Perspective." In the Summer edition are these articles: "New Initiatives"; "Language Support across the Curriculum"; "Literacy Work with 'Fourth World' Families"; "Basic Skills Work in YTS (Youth Training Scheme)"; and "A Community Wallhanging." The Autumn issue contains the following: "Assessing the Progress of Learners"; "Getting Students to Predict"; "Steamy Summer in the Big Apple!"; and "Mind over Maths." Each issue also contains about a dozen reviews of books and other materials related to adult literacy. The newsletters are illustrated with color photographs. (KC)

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Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit

Newsletter

Nos. 28-31

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Newsletter ALBSU

No. 28
Winter 1988

Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit

Staff Accreditation

One of the major developments in training over the last two years has been ALBSU's initiatives to develop accreditation for staff in adult literacy and basic skills. The initial period of experiment, through Pilot Projects, has almost finished and by April 1989 an accreditation framework should be available throughout England and Wales.

The primary aim of all training must be the improvement of tuition for the student, although clearly tutors receive considerable benefit from training and other forms of staff development. Basic education has put considerable emphasis on staff training ranging from the initial training of volunteers and paid staff through to the provision of in-service training opportunities at a variety of levels and of varied kinds. Like much in basic education, however, considerable differences exist from area to area.

Current Training Provision

Most LEAs and voluntary organisations provide some initial training for volunteers and most pretty well insist that all volunteers successfully complete such a course. Sadly a small number of LEAs appear not to provide any real initial training for volunteers and claim, not very convincingly in the Unit's view, that volunteers receive initial training 'on the job'. Often, however, these authorities are precisely those which spend little money on basic education and have few paid support staff to provide training 'on the job'.

ALBSU has always believed that volunteers make an important contribution in basic education so long as they are carefully selected and inducted, well trained and effectively supported by knowledgeable, specialist, paid support staff. Where this is not available the quality of tuition is likely to be poor.

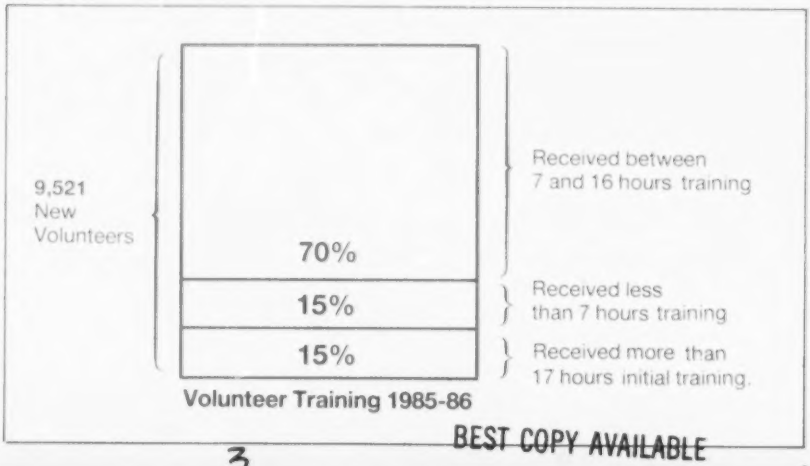
The training of paid group tutors is even more patchy. In some LEAs a comprehensive, well planned programme of training is provided for staff, and tutors are encouraged to take part on a regular basis. The programme provided by the ILEA has been noticeable in this respect, although a number of other LEAs also provide substantial training opportunities.

Smaller and less well resourced LEAs, however, have greater difficulty in making such comprehensive provision. Often they have too few paid staff to make specific training worthwhile or cost effective and rely instead on a variety of training and staff development opportunities available outside the authority's area. The most significant of these are probably opportunities provided regionally through ALBSU sponsorship although other general opportunities such as adult education Stage I and Stage II and specific courses such as the RSA Diploma are also available for some basic education staff. Sometimes, however, difficulties in making provision are used to disguise lack of commitment and will.

Developing an Accredited System

Back in 1983 ALBSU undertook a major consultation process concerning the future of our Regional Training Programmes. LEAs and practitioners almost universally appreciated the opportunities provided through the Unit's Regional Training Programmes. However, many people felt that there was a need to develop greater coherence in staff training in basic education particularly as many practitioners had been on a substantial number of courses but, in reality, received little recognition for it. Moreover, whilst more general training in the teaching of adults was useful, there was a need to provide accreditation in a range of more specialised skills as well as in general approaches to working with adults.

It would have been all too easy to develop



Volunteer Training 1985-86

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a framework for accreditation from the centre but the Unit felt that this was undesirable and did not reflect the partnership approach of ALBSU. Thus, we determined to sponsor some essentially experimental work to inform the process of developing a framework for accreditation.

Just over two years ago ALBSU sponsored three major Pilot Projects to explore approaches to accreditation. These Projects have been undertaken by Regional Advisory Councils in the Southern Region and in the West Midlands and by the Welsh Joint Education Committee in Wales. This commitment by the Unit of almost £200,000 to sponsor these Projects has been in addition to a similar sum provided for Regional Training Programmes in the nine regions of England and in Wales.

What we were looking for was a system of accreditation for staff which was consistent with the participatory approach to training which ALBSU has developed since 1980. Thus, we did not want an examination based course but rather a framework which took account of previous learning and different starting points and assessed competencies in a number of areas on a continuous basis. ALBSU was also aware of the need to provide a system of accreditation which would allow different people to be accredited by different routes.

The Unit is also clear that accreditation should not end up with everyone receiving a recognised certificate regardless of competence. We do not help students (or ourselves) by accepting bad practice and poor teaching. Nor is it any use denying that both exist. Despite the commitment to student centred approaches, too much *tutor* centred provision exists. In spite of the encouragement to use adult material, tutors using primary age reading schemes can still be seen. Some poor provision is undoubtedly due to lack of resources although it is all too easy to blame all weaknesses on funding problems, rather than recognise that certain fundamental principles of good practice need to be accepted whatever the funding position. Determining the precise effect training has on the quality of tuition is never easy particularly as all sorts of other factors have to be taken into consideration. However, where effective training exists, the quality of tuition is usually high.

Consultation

In the spring ALBSU is undertaking another period of consultation concerning a proposed framework for staff accreditation based on the lessons arising from our three Pilot Projects. This framework aims to provide a system of accreditation in every region of England and Wales, in the first instance for full and part-time paid staff. It has not been developed with English as a Second Language workers in mind (the history of ESL training is somewhat different from basic education), although it may be possible to add a complete module for second language work at a later date. Although those entering the accreditation system will not need to possess any formal qualification, they will be expected to have worked in basic education for at least six months and to have successfully taken an initial training course which is recognised by the Unit.

An Accreditation Framework

The Accreditation framework developed by ALBSU, in collaboration with Regional Advisory Councils, is intended to focus on the attainment of competence in a number of key areas of basic education through a variety of means including attendance at specific training courses, specific projects and teaching experience. Up to a third of the credits needed may also be given for previous experience. Central to this whole approach will be the use of mentors to help participants plan their learning in order to be accredited. Whilst regional certificates recognised by ALBSU may be granted, it is intended that the Scheme should be nationally validated.

The Unit is currently consulting, through the good offices of Regional Advisory Councils, practitioners in each region as well as appropriate national organisations interested or involved in adult and continuing education training. This period of consultation will be completed before the summer and the final framework for accreditation will be available in the autumn of 1988. It is intended to encourage each region to implement this framework in April 1989.

Whilst the accreditation system may be pump primed by the Unit in order for it to become established, in the longer term it is felt desirable that it should fit into the pattern of other training opportunities for staff. Moreover, the operation of existing regional training and staff development programmes will need to be reconsidered in order that there is a clear relationship to staff accreditation.

At present accreditation is intended for paid staff. ALBSU recognises, however, the need for a 'career ladder' for both volunteers and paid staff and, thus, it may be useful to consider how greater coherence can be brought to initial volunteer training. After over a decade of experience it should be possible to determine a number of factors concerning initial training including length of courses, the broad curriculum, delivery methods and evaluation of effectiveness whilst still retaining the flexibility needed locally.

It may be desirable, for instance, for the Unit in partnership with Regional Advisory Councils, Local Education Authorities and voluntary organisations to develop a recognised certificate to be awarded to volunteers who have completed a course of initial training successfully. Clearly the development of certification at this level would involve the establishment of approved courses and a system of moderation. Whilst this may pose considerable difficulties, it would ensure that greater coherence existed in respect of initial volunteer tutor training and that volunteers trained in one part of England and Wales were recognised as trained in another.

A partnership between the central unit, regional and local bodies and practitioners has been one of the major strengths of basic education. In such a partnership a central unit both leads and follows particularly as local circumstances demand a certain amount of local flexibility. However, flexibility cannot be used to disguise bad practice or a lack of coherence. ALBSU believes that the investment it has made — and will contine to make — in making staff training more coherent will be reflected in an overall improvement in the quality of tuition provided for each individual student.

Postcript

This is the last issue of the ALBSU Newsletter in the current style. The Newsletter has effectively remained unchanged since ALBSU was set up in 1980 whilst there have been considerable changes in other Unit publications as well as in design and printing technology.

From May 1988 ALBSU's Newsletter will appear in full colour and will be expanded to 16 pages from the current 12. We have also made some changes in the format of the Newsletter although it will continue to include articles, information and reviews.

The Newsletter will also continue to be published 4 times a year although we are hoping to improve its production so that it appears at a regular time. In future, therefore, the ALBSU Newsletter will be published in May, July, November and February each year. The Unit knows that the Newsletter has a long chain of distribution and although we cannot do much about local distribution, ALBSU hopes that improved production at this end will mean that readers will get copies sooner rather than later. The Newsletter continues to be available free of charge.

We hope you like it and welcome any comments.

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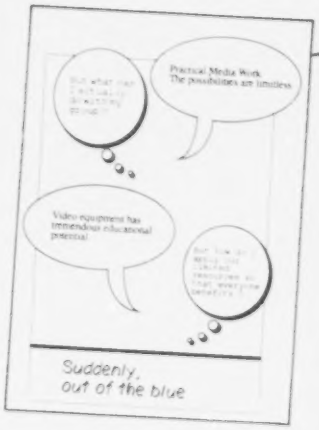
Copies of ALBSU's Annual Report for 1986-7 are available from the Unit.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NAVABE

It was a warm evening in the summer of '87. The venue was Cardiff University and the event was the ALBSU summer school, a group of people were gathered in the darkened corners of the students' union bar.

Faces were creased and feelings were running high. What could cause such concern as to make these poor people forget the serious matter of Welsh bitter? The answer was not difficult

- All of these people gathered round the table were founder members of NAVABE. NAVABE? What on earth is Navabe? I hear you ask. All will be revealed, but first more about the founders.
- All of the people around the table were involved in adult basic education in some way or another. They were tutors from Manchester, Cardiff, Halifax, Newport Pagnell, Yorkshire, as well as organisers from Chester.
- All of the people present were either paid members of staff or volunteers.
- All of these people agreed to attend the inaugural meeting of NAVABE, which would be run at one of the extra sessions provided by the summer school planning team.
- At this meeting the ideas put forward at less formal meetings were aired and put into some semblance of order. And now, as promised, all will be revealed.

The National Association of Volunteers in Adult Basic Education (NAVABE) was born. The main aim of this association is to represent the interests of volunteers in ABE. The main points to arise from this meeting were:

1. There is a need for volunteers to have and to belong to their own association.

2. There is a need for a national register of volunteers to be kept by the volunteers' own association.

3. Volunteers need their own regional associations.

The facts which gave rise to these points were as follows:

1. Volunteers work in all areas of ABE throughout the country.

2. Volunteers make up 80% of the tutorial staff.

3. Volunteers in some parts of the country receive very little training.

4. Volunteers in some parts of the country receive no help with expenses (which actually means they are paying for the privilege of being volunteers).

5. Volunteers feel isolated.

The main aim of this association is to try and solve these problems which have been raised by the members of NAVABE.

Progress Report

There are now regional associations of NAVABE in Liverpool and Coventry, and it is hoped to have regional associations in all parts of the Midlands and North West by early this year.

It is hoped that a national conference can be held before the end of this year.

Anyone interested in joining NAVABE and setting up their own regional associations should contact me at the following address:

Barry Wilson, Chairman,
c/o MCVS, Mount Vernon Green,
Hall Lane,
Liverpool L7 8TF.

I look forward to an avalanche of mail from all of you out there and I ask you all to be patient, no matter how long it takes all of your letters will be answered.

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Meeting Half Way

A report on the first two years work of the Basic Education Development Scheme with single homeless people at the North Lambeth Day Centre in central London.

The report covers the origins of the project, its aims and methodology in establishing basic education in a social work setting, and makes recommendations for future areas of work with single homeless people.

The project was initially funded by ALBSU who also gave financial assistance in the production of the report.

ISBN: 0948676019

Published by: North Lambeth Day Centre Ltd.

Cost: £1.50 (to cover distribution costs)

Send order form to:

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North Lambeth Day Centre
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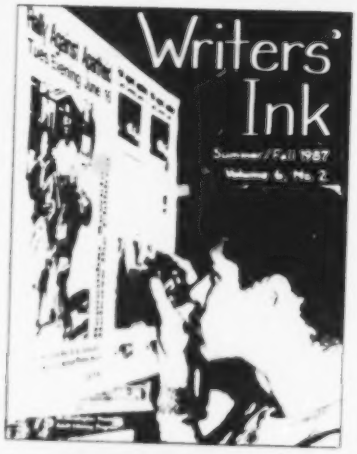
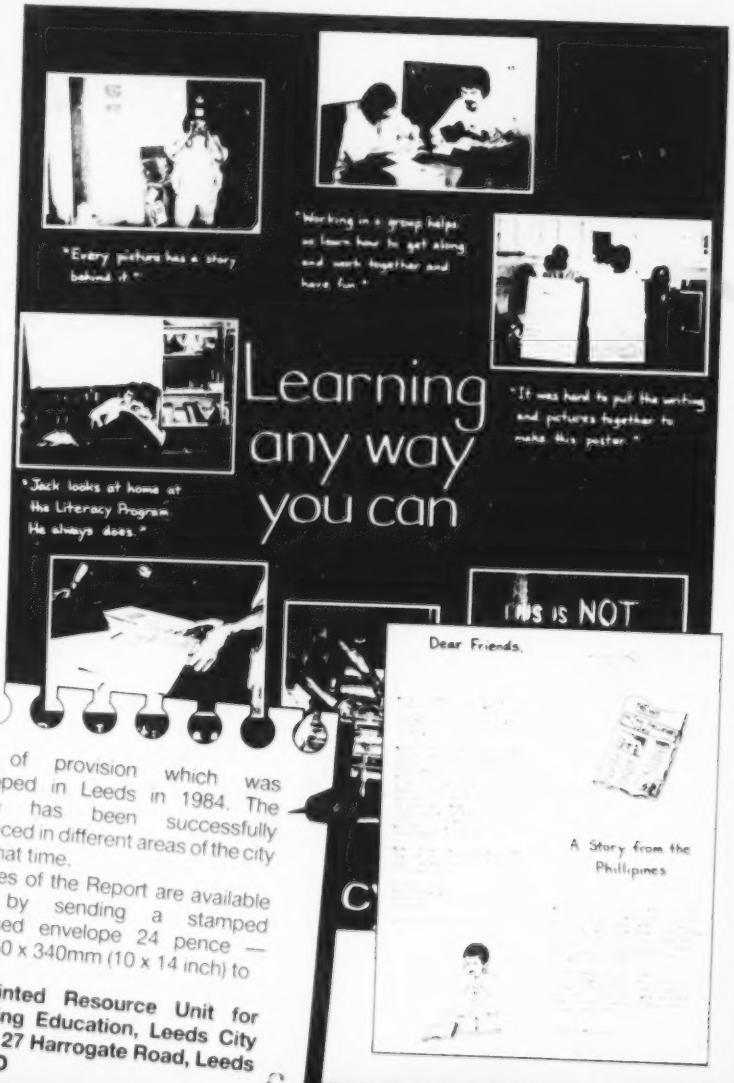


Writers' Ink

The Writers' Ink Group, in Toronto, produced a magazine and poster to celebrate World Literary Day. They write "We learned to use cameras, learned about how printers print magazines and posters. We got together stories and layed them out. It was hard work but enjoyable."

They would welcome reactions. Their address is:

St Christopher House
Adult Literacy Programme
761 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario M6J 1GI


"Every picture has a story behind it."
"Working in a group helps us learn how to get along and work together and have fun."
Learning any way you can
"It was hard to put the writing and pictures together to make this poster."
"Jack looks at home at the Literacy Program. He always does."
Dear Friends,
A Story from the Philipines

Return to Learn new course for adults

A Report on Curriculum Development with Adult Basic Education Students in Leeds

This report was compiled by the Basic Education Team, Leeds City Council, following the introduction of a new type of provision which was developed in Leeds in 1984. The course has been successfully introduced in different areas of the city since that time.

Copies of the Report are available FREE by sending a stamped addressed envelope 24 pence — sized 250 x 340mm (10 x 14 inch) to

The Printed Resource Unit for Continuing Education, Leeds City Council, 27 Harrogate Road, Leeds LS17 9PD

Afraid to Fail

Adults who take up basic education often have considerable experience of previous failure in learning. Fear of failure can inhibit them from risking new learning. In this article Margaret Siddall, Tutor Organiser for the Chanctonbury area of West Sussex, sets the fear of failure in context, and offers some suggestions on ways of exploiting "mistakes" positively.

Experiencing failure

Fear of failure is a very real fear at some time in our lives. But for the ABE student this fear can be even more deep rooted. Having experienced 'failure' — for whatever reason — in acquiring a reasonable level of literacy at school, attempting it in adulthood is an even greater hurdle. Those who come forward and say they have problems are remarkably courageous. But having taken this first step, and despite their determination to succeed, the old 'fear of failure' feelings are often still present — and these hamper progress.

John Holt's book 'How Children Fail' [1] outlines many reasons for failure in children; reasons which ultimately affect them as adults, who may then become ABE students. If children learn that they can't always succeed first time, then 'failure' can be honourable and constructive, and if this is learnt early enough everyone would be less afraid to fail. To attempt something and get it wrong should be more worthwhile than not attempting it *in case* we get it wrong.

But once children start to fall behind in school the influences are accumulative. Lack of understanding prevents them from building on and acquiring new knowledge, which follows throughout their schooling. As they fall further behind they are afraid to show their lack of knowledge in case they are thought to be 'dumb' — and so they become more and more confused. It is far easier to keep quiet, to allow their minds to drift, than to show they don't know.

Equally, in later schooling, it is easier to 'fool around for a laugh' or be disruptive to gain attention, and so improve their immediate standing with classmates, while at the same time attempting to undermine teacher status. Paul Willis [2] identifies this as part of the 'counter-school culture' which: ". . . involves a deep seated sceptism about the value of qualifications in relation to what might be sacrificed (in time and energy) to get them." But without further knowledge and without practice their problems go on increasing. Although their self-image may be temporarily boosted in this way, confidence often decreases, particularly once they leave school and begin to realise their limitations.

Positive mistakes

One of the difficulties ABE tutors have is overcoming this lack of confidence, which prevents students attempting words/spelling/reading/writing — or any area where they have already experienced 'failure' and therefore know it could happen again. Raising students' confidence — by building on their personal knowledge and experience; by creating situations where failure is minimized and by much praise — is extremely important. With improved confidence, self-image is also raised and students feel more able to respond. Thus an upward spiral effect takes place, as students see themselves improving.

At the same time it is equally important that their confidence is raised in order to make mistakes. They should be able to attempt answers without the fear of being wrong; secure in the knowledge that if they are wrong it won't matter, because at least they have made an attempt.

In a one-to-one situation or small group, students can learn that making mistakes is part of life, and that by making them without fear not only can they be corrected, but because of identifying the problem greater progress can be made. Instead many students hold back, fearing that by giving a possibly incorrect answer or pronouncing a word in an unusual way, they may be ridiculed, which has probably already been experienced at school. In an obscure way 'not doing' isn't seen as 'not achieving', since the student hasn't proved s/he is *incapable* of doing — so it could be assumed that had the task been undertaken it might well have been successful! Similarly, mumbling a word could be thought to be misheard, rather than actually wrong. The 'shame' of not knowing is very deep rooted.

But equally the 'shame' of giving a wrong answer in front of other students can seem just as humiliating. This was pin-pointed recently in a small group of students with very basic English. A student with severe spelling difficulties joined the group and attempted to spell a word. The offering was far from correct and one student laughed and derided the attempt — which naturally caused embarrassment. Fortunately the tutor used this opportunity to explain why they each needed the support of the group to give them confidence to attempt an answer. And that, far from humiliating those who make this effort, the others should be pleased that someone has had the courage to try. The point was taken, so a situation that could have had adverse repercussions had a positive outcome.

'Intermediate impossibles'

Occasionally, after writing an answer, students will say: "That's wrong, I know that's wrong." But by saying this they can at least be partially right — if the answer is wrong! Whereas quite often the answer is right, but this doesn't appear to be diminished by having made the comment. By hedging their bets in this way they don't experience complete failure. If 'that's wrong' is said, it's useful to ask why. Then the reason can be analysed and hopefully there will be more confidence in answering another time, without this rider.

Similarly, if incorrect answers can be seen to have some relevance i.e. 'fir' instead of 'fur', the difference can be pointed out. One student I had wrote the word 'knumn' — a marvellous interpretation of 'numb' especially as we were concentrating on silent letters at the time. It showed he appreciated the different spellings for the two different sounds. He also wrote 'jerarph' which is a logical alternative for 'giraffe'.

In his book, 'Po: Beyond Yes and No' [3] Edward de Bono suggests the 'intermediate impossible' in the process of thought. Perhaps if we could learn to see 'mistakes' or 'wrong' answers as intermediate impossibles, which could be used as stepping stones to lead on to further possibilities, the fear of failure would be diminished. For once the fear of failure goes progress can leap ahead.

Books

1. Holt J. *How Children Fail.* Penguin

2. Willis P. Education and Qualifications. *Family, Work and Education* Edited by Reedy S. and Woodhead M. Hodder and Stoughton.

3. de Bono E. *Po. Beyond Yes and No* Penguin.

Adult Basic Education and Libraries: Potentials Realised

Librarians and basic education practitioners in Leicestershire have worked together for many years to develop an effective partnership between their two services. In this article Sylvia Riches (County Organiser for Adult Basic Education, Leicestershire Education Authority) and Stephen Hoy, (Principal Librarian: Special Client Groups, Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service) outline some of the models which have worked well and describe successful initiatives they have taken.

The two services

In the last issue of the ALBSU newsletter, it was suggested that adult basic education services and library information services have a great potential for working together, to the benefit of both organisations. In Leicestershire this potential has been explored over a number of years and there are many ways in which the two services interact.

Leicestershire County Council has a good record for inter-agency co-operation with both the statutory and voluntary sectors, and in promoting inter-departmental networking. Until recently the adult basic education service in Leicestershire was constrained by the lack of full-time staff and the then emphasis on literacy teaching. Fortunately this situation has now changed, and the service is staffed by a range of full-time organisers and has extended its remit into numeracy, life and social skills tuition; "Link into Learning" has been adopted as the title of the service.

The Libraries and Information Service has held materials for use by tutors and students since the early 1970s and is committed to the development of services to groups and individuals who have any form of special need. Unlike some library authorities, each team of librarians has one member who has a specific responsibility for the development of services for adult new readers. The service is co-ordinated by a principal librarian on behalf of the Assistant Director for Special and Educational services.

Effective liaison

One of the biggest problem areas in liaising with other agencies is coming to terms with the ways in which those agencies operate their geographic areas. Very few have areas that are co-terminous and this can cause problems in identifying who the most appropriate contact is on either side, particularly where, for example, one library area includes 3 adult basic education areas. The way in which this is overcome in Leicestershire is by the publication of an annual contacts list. This is an alphabetical listing by library of the appropriate librarian for the area and the appropriate adult basic education contact with their telephone numbers. Once compiled, such a listing is quick and easy to update and goes a long way towards the maintenance and improvement of effective contacts (particularly where new staff are concerned). An extract from the contact list is illustrated below.

Library	*Contact Librarian*	*Tel No.*	*Ad. Lit. Contact*	*Tel. No.*
Age Concern	Liz Jones	.....	Gwynneth Whitehouse	.....
Anstey	Judith Howells	.....	Christine Charles/ Pat Baker	.....
Ashby	Gill Fergus	.....	Pat Baker	.....
Aylestone	Jane Berry	.....	Sue Houlton	.....
Barrow	Christine Stark	.....	Jennifer Cowling	.....
Barwell	Aguita Tennant	.....	Mary Harrison	.....
Beaumont Leys	Judith Howells	.....	Chistine Charles	.....
Belgrave	Rachel Harriss	.....	Pauline Newbold	.....
Birstall	Bev. Kaye	.....	Pauline Newbold	.....
Blaby	Jane Berry	.....	Oonagh McGarry	.....
Bottesford	Judith Wilkinson	.....	Alison Rose	.....

The contact list is usually produced to co-incide with the annual liaison meeting between adult basic education area organisers and contact librarians. The meeting is attended by all organisers and contact librarians and the responsibility for organising and co-ordinating the meeting is shared between central staff from the two services. The purpose of the meeting is to enhance and improve communication and to discuss areas of common need or potential action. Meetings have been held for the past three years and are always well attended; discussion topics have included critieria for book selection, local joint working arrangements, library user education sessions for adult basic education students and joint publicity exercises.

Materials selection

On a country-wide basis, an annual exhibition of resources for adult basic education is organised and used as a facility for the purchase of materials for both libraries and basic education schemes. The 1988 exhibition will take place at Vaughan College, Leicester on 8th September (to co-incide with International Literacy Day) and the exhibitors will include Winslow Press, Avanti Books and Blackthorn Books. The day is open to anyone to attend, although specific invitations are also issued to staff from homes and day centres for elderly people; day centres, community and hospital provision for people with learning disabilities; prison education and schools. One interesting development has been that contact librarians and their local adult basic education area organiser often attend the exhibition together and jointly

decide what will be purchased for library stocks.

This joint selection is an extension of the already well developed relationship at field level. Librarians are encouraged to involve area organisers in all aspects of library services for adult basic education students, so, in addition to the joint selection, most librarians responsible for adult basic education and local area organisers will edit the library stock of adult basic education materials in each library on an annual basis and discussions will take place on the most effective methods of displaying and exploiting the library stock of adult basic education material. Loans of material are made to area organisers on a regular basis which enables the organiser to have access to a range of resources not otherwise available, whilst the librarian is able to ensure that library stock is used as effectively as possible.

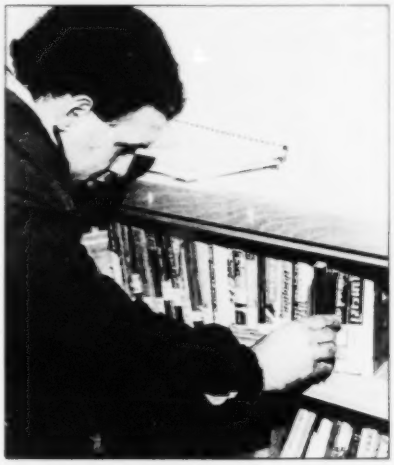
Library user education

Librarians and area organisers also work closely on the development of library user education for adult basic education classes. From experience, it is evident that both potential and actual adult basic education students experience many problems both in taking the first step into a library and in finding their way around the complex web of rules, regulations and library systems. User education can help overcome such problems. Sessions are organised to run in libraries either during opening time, or, if the group prefers, after the library is closed. Wherever possible such sessions take place at the library most appropriate to the area in which group members live, and at a time that suits the group. Depending on the needs of the group, sessions may run over 2 or 3 library visits or be confined to one visit.

The content of the user education course will be determined in advance in consultation with the area organiser and will include:

- tour of the library
- arrangement of stock
- use of the catalogue
- use of indexes, dictionaries etc.
- exercises based on the students' own interests to give them confidence in using library systems
- introduction to as many members of staff as possible (this helps to ensure that students going to the library at a later date will recognise counter staff previously met at a library session).

It is preferable to hold such sessions in library opening hours because students can then practice borrowing books in a "normal" way and this helps to give confidence when they use the library by themselves. Sessions are designed to be as flexible as possible to allow time and space for students to explore or develop areas of particular interest to them. Most students join the library at these sessions and one student subsequently brought his own writings to the library for the library staff to look at. As one senior librarian recently commented "Once adult basic education students are in and used to the service, their enthusiasm know no bounds!" Adult basic education and library staff in Leicestershire are currently working on a book which will help adult basic education students make effective use of the library service.



Evening entertainment

As well as library induction sessions, librarians and basic adult education organisers also organise individual events for students. Library quiz evenings, for example, build on the initial sessions described above and entail a lot of preparation in devising questions and work sheets which are not only enjoyable for students to complete, but also enable them to practise using library stock and finding information. These have proved popular and, whilst raising awareness of what libraries provide, they also help to make participants feel more at home there.

Specialist library evenings are based on activities which take place in the library, again making full use of the library resources. These events are planned jointly by adult basic education staff and librarians. One example has been a Victorian Evening, at which students and tutors made a Victorian Christmas card, read about the traditions and activities at Christmas in Victorian times and made a Christmas decoration. Later, they were given a printed recipe for mulled wine which was served by an appropriately dressed maid. This event entailed a great deal of co-operation between the two services but proved to be one which few people will ever forget.

Training and networks

Training of library staff in adult basic education related matters is crucial in promoting an understanding of student needs. Adult basic education area organisers in Leicestershire attend meetings of library counter staff to talk about their work, the difficulties faced by students in using libraries and ways in which staff can be more responsive to those needs. All librarians receive some training on basic education work as part of their induction programme and in-service seminars (run by adult basic education staff) are also held. Librarians also make library meeting space available for groups and disseminate information on basic education provision.

Five of the county adult basic education schemes currently meet with a support group once each term; in addition, the five city schemes are now in the process of forming a city-wide support group which will encompass providers across a wide basic education spectrum.

Staff from the Library and Information Service are members of these support groups, along with representatives from the Adult Basic Education Service, Social Services, Y.T.S., Homestart, the Volunteer Bureaux, local further education colleges, community colleges, penal establishments and many other agencies. The purpose of the group is to facilitate an exchange of ideas and resources, and to share problems and new developments.

Initiatives and co-ordination

At recent support group meetings, Libraries' staff have offered accommodation for a new adult basic education group; a library evening for 'reluctant readers'; space for publicity for the county adult basic education display unit and for local posters and information; a desk for a 'drop-in' facility for form-filling and letter-writing; purchase of student materials and many other supportive gestures.

The advantages of working together are clearly evident from the Leicestershire experience. It enables an exchange of ideas and expertise, a sharing of resources (both human and financial), a promotion of understanding of the aims and objectives of the participating agencies and, most importantly, promotes a more comprehensive, efficient and effective service for the adult basic education student, who can only benefit from the co-operation and co-ordination achieved.

This article has indicated just a few examples of co-operation. There have been many more. What they show is that a close working relationship between the Libraries and Information and Adult Basic Education Services is desirable and offers even more scope for creative and imaginative work with adult basic education students.

Literacy Work with Local Employers

There is increasing recognition that literacy providers can offer adults help with basic skills in a way that doesn't involve them having to identify themselves as 'literacy students' in the conventional sense, or make a long-term commitment to study. Paid Educational Leave, where basic skills work is seen as part of 'on the job training', provides one way of doing this. In this article Mary Kett, Director Beauchamp Lodge Adult Literacy Scheme, describes some courses organised by Beauchamp Lodge for employees of Woolworth's Head Office, providing 3 intensive short courses in advanced basic skills over a period of 2 years. The article illustrates how schemes can respond to specific 'once-off' needs and so reach potential students who might otherwise not take advantage of provision.

The need for specialised courses

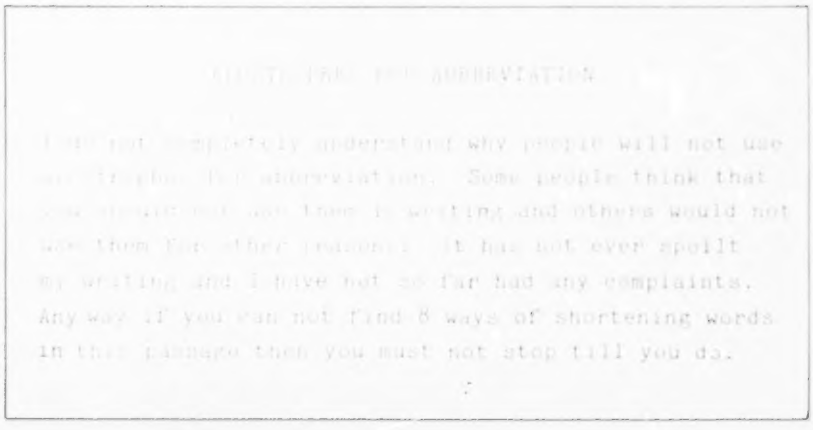
Beauchamp Lodge is based in North Westminster — not far from Woolworth's Head Office in Marylebone Road. Over a period of time the firm had referred a number of employees to the scheme for literacy support, but the type of tuition offered did not seem to suit them and students did not stay for long. The company was very supportive of their employees' attendance at the scheme, seeing an improvement in basic skills as linked to improved performance. When this trend of referrals became apparent, the literacy scheme contacted Woolworth's personnel department, to discuss with them precisely what kind of tuition they wanted for their employees. Agreement was reached on the need for a more intensive course than would normally be available at Beauchamp Lodge. This course was to be specifically focussed on employees' work needs, mainly in the areas of advanced writing skills. A short course in grammar, punctuation, spelling and letter writing was arranged, to be held at Woolworth's training centre at Head Office. This meant that the course was perceived as part of Woolworth's training rather than as 'literacy provision'. Workers who attended were to be given paid leave and Woolworths agreed to pay Beauchamp Lodge a fixed fee to provide tuition.

What happened on the course?

The course was held for 2 mornings a week, for 3 weeks. 10 people took part. The content of the course would be familiar to literacy tutors working with students on advanced writing skills in a range of contexts — mainstream literacy groups, Fresh Start/ Return to Study courses or groups preparing for diplomas such as the RSA Certificate of Continuing Education. Topics dealt with included use of sentences and paragraphs, the apostrophe, avoiding ambiguous structures, appropriate use of language and ways of simplifying jargon-filled or too formalised communications. All this was placed in the context of participants' work needs. Ample time for practice was allowed and homework reinforced points covered during the sessions.

How were students selected?

Staff were notified of the course and then asked individually by managers if they wanted to take part. Unlike other initiatives in the area of paid educational leave, such as Workbase, there was no general survey of employees' educational needs. The issue of 'literacy' was not discussed. Those interested were then given a simple questionnaire in which they were asked to specify any difficulties in writing etc., that affected their work. Most of those who responded were from the typing pool or junior secretaries in a number of departments. It was clear that those who demonstrated an interest in this kind of course represented the tip of the iceberg. Junior managerial staff were also identified as having some literacy problems, but could not be asked to come forward. So, while this



approach could be criticised, on the basis that it did not provide a comprehensive survey of workers' educational needs, and merely identified those personnel who had least to lose by admitting to needing help, it took a first step in establishing the necessity for this kind of course, and making a positive response.

What the students wanted

Those who showed an interest in attending the course expressed needs that were clearly related to their work, and that were not identified as 'literacy problems'. Only one person had problems with reading. Spelling, punctuation and formal writing tasks were the areas most frequently mentioned. Comments included:

"I waste time correcting mistakes."

"English wasn't my best subject at school, so I am taking the opportunity to improve on it."

"It would make me more confident."

A number of junior employees saw participation on the course as a step towards promotion. All but one of the participants were women.

The Outcome

The participants' evaluation was generally positive. People felt they had benefitted from attending and managers reported a clear improvement in skills. Two further courses of a similar nature were subsequently held on the basis of the success of the first. The majority of those attending did not opt to continue tuition after the courses ended — only one student took up provision at Beauchamp Lodge. After the third course, the pool of potential participants was felt to be exhausted. It would be possible,, however, to offer the course again at a later stage.

Conclusions

This kind of outreach work shows that literacy schemes can reach groups of potential students who would not normally be attracted to mainstream provision. The recent research report, 'Literacy, Numeracy and Adults: Evidence from the Child Development Study', published by ALBSU, provides fresh evidence that the majority of adults who perceive themselves to have problems with basic skills have not yet availed themselves of existing provision; in fact, only 5% of those women and 10% of those men who reported literacy difficulties had attended courses. These statistics may just confirm what many literacy workers already know to be the case -- but they can help us focus on what new approaches providers can take to reach some of these potential students. One response would be to find new ways of publicising provision. Another is to target work aimed at specific groups. Paid educational leave does open up greater access to people whose working patterns make it difficult for them to commit themselves on a long-term basis to study. Providers must also think about new ways of marketing their services in order to reach a broader range of adults who need help with basic skills.

The ALBSU Newsletter does not usually carry tributes to basic education workers. We are pleased, however, to make an exception for Silvia Wright from Hounslow who sadly died, all too young, in February. Her colleague, Charles Pinder, has kindly written a tribute to her which all of us at ALBSU would wish to be associated with. Silvia personified all that is best about basic education; she is a sad loss, and will be sorely missed.

Silvia Wright's death on 20 February 1988 leaves a vacuum that will be difficult to fill. I speak here not of her private life — to her family and many friends. How could such a gap ever be filled — but many of those who were privileged to share her professional world are wondering too, how life can ever be the same again.

She brought to her work with disadvantaged people — of Hounslow and beyond — a blend of energy, imagination and humane caring that, for many of her colleagues, made her unique.

It was typical of Silvia that after graduating as a mature student at the West London Institute in 1976 she immediately sought to use her new expertise to the benefit of those less fortunate than herself. Recognising the difficulties faced by those who have grown to adulthood without the means to communicate through the written word — taken for granted by most of us — she turned her considerable skills to building up Hounslow's excellent literacy and numeracy scheme, and eventually becoming a key figure in the development of the Spring Grove Centre.

Silvia always felt a special debt of gratitude to ALBSU. Her original appointment as the Hounslow literacy organiser was funded by the then ALRA. Her involvement in the work of ALBSU steadily increased over the years. In recent years she has become committed to regional training organisation and a valued supporter of ALBSU initiatives nationally.

At Spring Grove she found fulfillment as an educator and organiser with a commitment that was almost limitless. In the adult education world, self-sacrifice is not unusual, but even here Silvia was exceptional. She had that dedication which would make any job into a vocation, perhaps not unconnected with her upbringing as a clergyman's daughter. Not that there was anything about her of self consciously 'improving' her fellow citizens, as anyone knows who worked or lived with that warm, self-effacing personality. What she did and what she was came spontaneously from a deep and simple humanity. Simple but not naive. True her colleagues found it touchingly easy to get a 'rise' on some matters in which she had an endearing innocence but in things that mattered, Silvia possessed an acute intelligence.

Hers was that kind of intelligence which finds expression in versatility. Early success in ballet was followed by a promising acting career on the West End Stage and briefly in films. It was in the world of arts and entertainment that Silvia met a professional singer Arnold Wright — later to be her husband. From that to motherhood but still unstoppable. The early 1970s saw Silvia, now with 3 young sons, as a leading spirit in setting up Hounslow's Community Relations Council of which she was the first Chairman. This was an association of which she always remained proud. Then to College and finally to Spring Grove to take over the literacy scheme.

Silvia was so many things that she will probably never be fully appreciated by any single one of us. Devoted wife and proud mother, dedicated educationalist, loyal colleague. But what she was to all of us was a deeply loved friend. We are all better people for having known her.

Charles Pinder

REVIEWS

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Strategies For Studying

by M. Coles and E.C. White

Published by Collins Educational

Price: £3.95

ISBN 0 00 197284 7

An immensely helpful, informative and enjoyable book. 'Strategies for Studying' offers a positive approach to acquiring good study practices with much space given to planning activities, timetabling, record sheets, quotes from students and tutors, sketches, photographs, flow diagrams — this is surely no bad thing for the eager learner who finds it difficult to get organised, put pen to paper, assimilate and process information — in short, to acquire all those sought-after techniques of good study practice. It is — at a glance — a compulsive read attractively and humorously presented and well-illustrated with a lot of sound, constructive information.

Aimed to assist the student adult learner from Advanced Level, BTEC, GCSE, City and Guilds, RSA to YTS, there are sections on: studying after sixteen, study habits, setting realistic targets, organisation and planning, building up a strong mental self-image, developing memory skills, ways of making notes, storing information, library and research skills, reading strategies and essay writing, dealing with data including making use of computers, and exam techniques. The list is endless. But, the book is informative without being heavy. Throughout there are lively study practice activities. There is also a clear table of contents, a pull-out study year planner, a glossary of study terms and an index.

'Strategies for Studying' is a likeable book written in a lively manner with a clear accessible style.

Comments from adult students in Cardiff ranged from 'helpful . . . humorous . . . good ideas' to 'It'a great. It really gets down to the problem. It shows you how.' One young student — intending initially only to browse — was very reluctant to part with it!

This is one of the best books available on the subject. It is not liable to act as a deterrent. Because of its comprehensive content and attractive visual layout, it should act as a stimulant to studious and successful study practices.

Jean Stephens
Open Learning Co-ordinator/
ABE Development Officer
South Glamorgan Education Authority

Help Yourself — An Everyday Survival Handbook.

by Alastair Thomson and Rosemary Platt

Published by Impact Press

Price: £2.95

ISBN 0-245-54282-7

This book attempts to gather information that any individual might require to deal with everyday bureaucracy. I say it was a brave attempt because the book's ambit is so wide that I'm left wondering who exactly it is aimed at. The reactions that I got from my students were quite telling.

The most notable response was that the students made a bee-line from the list of contents straight to the chapter entitled 'Mind and Body'. I noted that it was the longest chapter. They thought it was a bit odd that the most interesting chapter came so late in the book (ninth out of eleven). Noting also that what did come first was 'Getting a job' followed closely by 'Working for a wage' made the book something of an 'also-ran'. Such a tone was only confirmed for some students by seeing such prescriptions as: 'Drink and tobacco are two areas where you should be able to cut down your spending' (p66). Students in my classes say that most if not all their knowledge of such things as the benefits system is either arrived at by personal experience or by word of mouth. I think that opening and closing times of important departments should be added.

I also thought it interesting that there is no listing in the index for Social Services, which I feel is a major omission. On the whole I think that a compendium of advice in book format is doomed before it hits the press.

Christopher John Dunn
Adult Basic Education
Bradford and Ilkley Community College.

Clare

by Mel Powers

The Scars That Marked

by Marie Nowland

Published by CAVE Publications Group,

3a Rectory Grove, London SW4 0DX.

Price £1 each (p&p 20p for the first book, 10p each for additional copies).

CAVE is a voluntary organisation running literacy, truancy, unemployed projects for young people. Cave Publications have produced a series of low cost, good quality, fully illustrated books by young new writers, for young inexperienced readers covering autobiography, life experience, poetry and fiction.

"Clare" is a story based on and dedicated to three people known to the writer, and is a powerful and moving account of the early death of a good friend. It is 20 A5 pages long, large print with a few lines to a page. Our individual comments:

"Clare is only young and she's dying of cancer. Her friend tries to comfort her. She finds it difficult to comfort Clare because she knows that she will soon die. Her friend wants to be with her all the time. Part of the book is alright and some of it is just upsetting."

"It's a good story but it's all about the same person".

"My opinion is that it shows a very strong relationship between two people."

"Well written and makes you think about friendship we all take for granted and good for encouraging other students to try their own made up stories, easy to relate to."

"Personally I found it depressing but felt compelled to finish reading the book, overall the book was worth reading."

"There should be more large print books."

"The Scars That Marked" (Poems about my feelings and things that have happened to me). 16 A5 pages, large print. The illustrations are simply drawn in black and white. Nice, very good would be the words to describe average, mediocre poetry but:

"Brilliant".

"Throw it in the bin".

"OK, great, OK".

"I liked the first one, really got into it about life, love this and the last one."

"Liked different poems, really liked the Elvis one, don't like poems about self."

"Good for others to read."

"My mate liked them."

"Good luck to her, hope she writes more," are the words we felt fitted Marie's well written powerful, challenging, moving but never boring poetry.

John Glynn
Gatehouse Project
Barry, Peter, P Higgings and other members of the Thursday Night Reading Club at Miles Platting Library, Manchester

Crosswords Three & Crosswords Four

by Hugh and Margaret Brown

Published by Brown and Brown

Keeper's Cottage, Westward, Wigton, Cumbria. CA7 8NQ.

Price and Details from Address Above

ISBN 1 870596 03 X

The Crosswords Stage Three and Four give a clear indication of what to expect from any crossword. It shows the student the layout of the clues and answers on the board.

Both the crossword books have an introduction contents page, which gives the sort of subjects that most well-known commercial crossword books contain.

Each crossword has a topical heading and some of the puzzles may require specialised knowledge about the subject e.g. Gardening or D.I.Y. For these topics the student may need guidance, although only the minimum of word supervision would probably be needed.

The Publishers, Brown and Brown, clearly print that the headings don't always relate to the crossword. For myself, I found this rather confusing.

For the students studying for the Basic English Exam and for the people who have literacy problems, the crossword books are there for them to take full advantage of by helping themselves, observing and using the correct English.

Since most topics are on general day-to-day subjects, the student can in fact learn something new and this may lead to new interests or hobbies.

With minor alterations, these crossword books could be adapted for students to try alone, or changed to stretch their vocabulary further.

Susan Brown,
with help from Adrienne and Yvonne
Adult Basic Education Co-ordinator,
Carrick District
Cornwall Local Education Authority

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Good Spelling Book Guide

by Hugh and Margaret Brown

Publisher Brown and Brown

Available from: Keeper's Cottage, Westward, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 8NQ.

Price: 40p (including p&p).

ISBN 1 870596 05 6

Without wishing to damn anyone's efforts "to make a personal selection of books on spelling," particularly when Hugh and Margaret Brown have a wealth of experience in the production and use of adult learning materials, I was disappointed to read their publication.

Although I appreciate their motives in reviewing and listing books with adult content I felt that their 'non exhaustive' selection was too sparse to be of great use to me and my students. Of course all tutors and students are constantly searching for new material but tend to have to order inspection copies of books, in print, in order to make their own selection. Sadly Brown & Brown do not supply inspection copies of books and would, it seems, be unable to influence publishers to think again if books were out of print.

Most useful to us — the 'Publisher Address' list.

Susan Brown (with tutors and students)
A.B.E. Co-ordinator (Carrick District)
Cornwall Local Education Authority

Poetic Licence

by Commonword Poetry, 1987

Price: £2.50

ISBN 0 946 745 40 4

Between Mondays

by Commonword Poetry, 1987

Price: £2.50

ISBN 0 946 745 35 8

I tend to feel supportive towards any person who commits their ideas and emotions to the public medium of text. However this support is qualified by the need to look objectively at the writing and allow others to advise before publication. Both of these anthologies would have benefited from greater selectivity in content. As neither volume states how the process of selection for publication was made I can only assume it was done collectively, by the groups themselves.

A major fault in "Poetic Licence" is that it falls into the trap of its own appellation. It is too long and the selections suffer from over indulgence and lack of critical awareness. Writers have submitted three, four or more poems where one or two, with extra revision, would have made more impact on the reader. Having said that, the volume is well produced and I liked the concept of introducing each section by name and fingerprint (was this a deliberate attempt at anonymity that linked to the lack of biographical information?). Of particular note are two poems, 'Too Late' and 'Sweet Dreams' by Peter Street, 'Photograph' and 'Summer' by Toby Dobson and all four poems by Lemn Sissay.

"Between Mondays" is a more considered book that is self-consciously aware of "poetic form" and because of this almost loses the vibrance so strongly present in "Poetic Licence". Overall the selections are more distanced and evoke marginally broader responses in the reader than those on offer in "Poetic Licence". Alex Warner poses a final question in 'Letter to a Lecturer':

"I wonder if you can respond to the spirit of these words"

My answer is: "Yes!"

Stephen Brain
Lecturer
Continuing & Community Education
University of London Goldsmiths' College

A Language In Common

by Marion Molteno

Published by The Women's Press Ltd

Price: £3.95

ISBN 0 7043 4050 X

Marion Molteno's collection of short stories is called 'A Language in Common' and deals with teaching English to Asian immigrants within the framework of a community network. The students we read about are mainly women and often housebound. Living like strangers in a strange land, then are often lonely and sometimes desperate, unable to participate in any sense in the culture they are now part of. The stories speak of everyday incidents in the lives of these women and of the harrowing times they go through, sometimes on account of their sex and their nationality. The only story about a man, and in fact the first one, about Mr Ramgharia is interesting. He comes as a breath of fresh air, bringing with him an old world courtesy and charm into the class. The idea of just wanting to learn, at his age, is a real message of hope to anyone who is stumbling through a cultural gap.

In 'Someone Else's Clothes' the writer dons a sari — a part of becoming someone else — taking on briefly the identiy of an Asian woman. Feelings of painful uncertainty and confusion ensue — she feels vulnerable. Can it be what many Asian women feel going down the High Street — alienated and surrounded by strangers?

'Writing on the Wall' deals with the ugly face of racism in this country. People see only what they want to see and it is when the students themselves view the threat that there is general awareness amongst all — the reasons for racism and how to combat it.

I found the stories quite convincing, the style easy and lucid and themes relevant to the teaching of English as a Second language. Using these stories in a predominantly Asian class would be useful. Many students would identify with the experiences dealt with in the book and it would therefore give confidence and reassurance. Ms Molteno is a thoughtful and compassionate writer using her skills in community teaching to write movingly and with insight about the Asian community. A book to be recommended for all language teachers, indeed for most language students.

Rita Zutshi
Part-time tutor, Streatham and Tooting,
Inner London Education Authority

Talking About Us
Talking About Pregnancy
Talking About Young Babies
Talking About Babysitting

by Heather Richards

Published by Hutchinson Education

Price: £6.00 (for a pack of four)

ISBN 09 173184 4

All four books have an attractive, inviting format, aimed at the teenager who appreciates glossy-type magazine images. Packed full of useful snippets of information and discussion points concerned with caring skills (the titles are self-explanatory!) Black and white photographs are expertly interwoven with a variety of printing styles usually employed in the modern advertising world, but put to very good effect here.

Although I teach a wide range of students ranging from severe to specific learning difficulties as well as mainstream caring skills students, I had the opportunity to show the books to all my groups and they were received enthusiastically by them. My adult literacy group found the change in writing styles a little confusing and also the subject matter in this case may have been inappropriate (too young for them!). In general my students found these books interesting and informative; they liked to dip in — they are certainly not BORING as most students felt the school book format usually is. Some of my students pounced on these titles — which says something for their style!

Maria Barclay
Lecturer,
Montgomery College of Further Education
Powys Education Authority

Socialising

by Harriet Smyth

Published by Learning Development Aids, Duke Street, Wisbech, Cambs. PE1 32A.

Price: £8.95

ISBN 0 905114 27 2

This pack is designed as resource material for a particular audience — adults with a mental handicap. The pack contains leaflets illustrating four topics: "Going to a Pub", "Going to a Party", "Eating out", "Cooking a meal".

They are all presented as A3 folded leaflets. The front page has a title and appropriate illustration, inside are 8 illustrations with captions, laid out in comic format; the back page suggests points for discussion. The whole is in black and white with single colour relief — green. The four areas are linked through the use of the same characters — Sue, Linda, Michael and Steve. There are four copies of each topic and the whole pack is accompanied by tutor notes.

The extra copies bulk up what would have been a very slim pack, nevertheless the A3 folded story sheet, with 8 main pictures contain sufficient text (about 20-25 words per caption) for a beginning reader, and the pictures supply enough context for non-readers to be able to participate.

continued overleaf

REVIEWS

The illustrations are clearly drawn and provide a basis for continuing discussion. The topics are interesting and realistic rather than exciting. The text is in larger than average, bold type and this is much appreciated by the target audience. The backpage exercises provoke useful discussion, had they been extended into worksheet/support material the pack would have been even more effective.

Socialising certainly deserves a place on the resource shelf. It can be used as a stimulus or to reinforce activities and discussion. We tried it with several groups, one group found they could read it themselves, another group told the story through the pictures and then regaled us with tales of their experiences.

The stories are 'hostel' based; but for this the material might be useful to an even wider audience.

Celia Loughnan
Adult Education Development Officer for adults with severe learning difficulties.
Social Services Department,
East Sussex County Council.

Numeracy Tutor Training Pack

by Judith Parker and Brendan Donovan

Published by Scottish Community Education Council,
Atholl House, 2 Canning Street, Edinburgh EH8 8EG.
Tel: 031 229 2433.

Price: £8 (including postage and packing)

ISBN 0 948231 45 0

This pack is intended as an initial training course for volunteer tutors working in a one-to-one relationship with a numeracy student. It can be used "either as a home study course, or a basis for the more traditional face-to-face training course." For the latter situation, the authors estimate that at least eight two-hour sessions will be needed with the trainer, plus about eleven hours at home to do the written Practical Tasks. They also say that individual units can be studied on their own.

There are over 200 pages in this pack, presented in double-spaced type on A4 paper. Pen-and-ink cartoons relieve the dull appearance of the page. The material is divided into sections on numeracy and adult students, the four rules, decimals, percentages, measurements, tests and exams, ideas and resources and case studies.

I showed the materials to 25 volunteers. One tutor worked through the whole pack. He felt that it was very comprehensive, with much detail, and he learnt a lot from it. He had great reservations about the 'distance learning' option because of the 'daunting' size of the pack, and the 'tests' (Practical Tasks) which would have put him off. All the tutors worked through the sections on addition and subtraction. the majority felt that the explanations given were clear and useful, although the errors in the adding section confused many, as one example was correct.

This illustrates the difficulty in selecting material for initial training. This section would probably be more relevant to tutors after working with a student, and could have been excluded. On the other hand, the pack did not contain a section on fractions, and the use of concrete objects was barely mentioned when a section was taken in isolation (as above). It was not very helpful in initial assessment either, saying "start from where your student thinks he's at." In my opinion, this pack lacks the careful balance achieved in some previously published materials.

Sheila Bower
A.B.E. Worker
Leeds Education Authority

Making A Splash

by John Townsend

Published by Hutchinson Education

Price: £1.05

ISBN 09 173223 9

Three short plays for up to four parts. Ted and Edna Plunge are on holiday at the seaside. But anything can happen — and does. A dead body in the sand, a coastguard with a cold and an ice cream man with a secret message all contribute to their adventures.

This book is for slow readers with a reading age of 7.5 on the Mugford Scale.

I used this book with two entirely different groups of readers. The first group was a class of teenagers in prison and the second was a group of students in an Adult Literacy class. Both groups enjoyed the plays and were quick to grasp the humorous situations. They found the plays relatively simple to read, becoming more confident as they progressed. The one problem I found was regarding the ice cream man, who spoke in broken English. The less able students found difficulty in comprehending this. I was told, "But that's not right is it?" It might have been simpler to use "standard" English. The use of idiomatic expressions created a good discussion point for afterwards.

The book was of the usual "Spiral" standard — easy to read and with the usual 'twist' to the story. I would recommend it for small groups of slow readers.

Sandy Driscoll
Tutor in Basic Education
Surrey Education Authority

Micro-computer review

"Copywrite"

Published by ESM Duke St,
Wisbech, Cambs PE 13 2AE

Price: £12.95

The "copywrite" program contains 3 different aspects.

- "Copy" which creates the reading exercise.
- "Builder" which allows the user to create, edit and save reading passages up to 18 lines in length.
- "Copyier" which enables the transfer of work to another disc or tape.

This program claims to be designed to suit all levels of ability, and provides reading and comprehension practice through a number of provided texts. The adaptable nature of this program, which is probably its greatest strength to the users is the ability to put in their own text on which to work in a variety of ways.

It is likely that any user will require to spend some time becoming familiar with the options on this program There as many as 8 separate instructions displayed at one time, which could easily be confusing for a student seeing them for the first time. But having understood these I felt that many students would be able to work unaided for long enough to allow the tutor to give time to others. I thought that the "copy" part of the program which creates a reading and comprehension exercise is very much suited to a group activity.

The "builder" program in which new text is written needs careful handling, and ideally this should be tested out before use. It is hard to obtain a flow of text because each line ends abruptly with a loud bleep, and the text is broken up into numbered lines. It felt a bit inhibiting when using this, especially after the "free" experience of Wordwise. I found that it was better to write no more than 14 lines of text out of a permissable 18 because if the user wishes to amend any of the first 4 of 18 lines they disappear at the top of the screen so that you are unable to see what you are trying to correct or amend. This was somewhat frustrating, I completely forgot the original text most times. But if limited to 14 lines the problem does not occur. The text must be typed in lower case, as all amendments are in lower case. This may be a difficulty but certainly needs to be understood by a user to avoid "MISTAKE" being constantly shown.

The facility to store texts on disc or tape is welcome. It enables work to be continued later, but it does require some procedures. This in itself indicates an opportunity for group learning.

Generally I felt that the programs offer a good variety of uses with groups or individuals. It is also available in French and German versions. The notes were good and explained the aspects of the programs very well.

Cath McGuiness
Cambridgeshire Local Education Authority

(Reprinted courtesy of Network: Newsletter for Adult Basic Education Computer users in the East Anglia Region)

Short Notices

On the Spot

A counselling and guidance handbook

by Nigel Collins

Published by Oxford University Press

Price: £4.95

ISBN 0 19919067 4

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SPRING
1988

No 29

ALBSU

Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit

NEWSLETTER

Photograph Tony Otten

The Secretary of State, Kenneth Baker, addressing an ALBSU Conference, "The 3R's at work", at the CBI.

[redacted]
PAGE 2

WORK FOR A LONG BREAK
PAGE 4

[redacted]
PAGE 10

BILINGUAL PUBLICITY
PAGE 11

[redacted]
PAGE 12

ASSESSING READING SKILLS IN A FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE
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THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

The strength of basic education has been the ability to change with the times to meet new needs. Thus, in the last ten years or so the challenge has been to consolidate what exists but also to strive to develop better provision and to establish the importance of ESL and basic education in the minds of the general public as well as in the priorities of decision makers. Changes in education heralded by the current legislation mean that the challenges ahead may be of crucial importance for everyone in continuing education.

The Education Reform Bill currently passing through Parliament signifies considerable change in education. Thus, the way the education service is both organised and operated in the 1990s is likely to be considerably different to the way it was organised and operated in say the 1970s. Education, usually something that people at best take for granted and at worst forget, has also assumed increasing importance and this is reflected in its public profile. In the main the Education Bill is not concerned with basic education although some aspects of it are likely to affect how provision operates in one way or another. For example, if schools opt out of a Local Education Authority and are funded directly by central government, will buildings continue to be available for groups meeting in the evening?

Two major concerns of the Bill are of importance to everyone involved in basic education as they will dictate the shape of provision in the 1990s. The balance of power and responsibility between Local Education Authorities and central government is undoubtedly shifting, although it is unlikely that there will ever be total central direction or total local autonomy. In fact, basic education was one of the first aspects of education to be affected by central government (some would say interference) through government grants to stimulate provision. It is doubtful, for example, whether the adult literacy campaign of 1975 would ever have got off the ground without the stimulation provided centrally by the BBC and the pump-priming central grants allocated by the Adult Literacy Resource Agency. Certainly it is salutory to remember that in the early 1970s only half of the local education authorities in England and Wales made any adult literacy provision whatsoever and what did exist was so badly funded that the quality of tuition was extremely poor in most places.

The subsequent history of basic education has involved continuing central funding, albeit largely for the development of provision and whilst this has not achieved standards of good practice throughout England and Wales, the number of authorities with extremely poor provision has declined considerably. Moreover, overall things have improved (although not perhaps rapidly enough); staff/student ratios are better in 1988 than in say 1978, more materials are now available, better, more coherent training exists and there has been a considerable improvement in teaching methods. Moreover, the profile of basic education also remains high and the need for well resourced, flexible provision is fairly constantly in the public eye. It is not by any means perfect, but progress has been and continues to be made.

Whilst basic education has, ALBSU believes, benefited from this central/local partnership, the position has been very different in respect of English as a Second Language provision for adults. Although for instance, much provision has been financed through Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966, this could not be said to indicate a similar central/local partnership. In fact, ESL has been starved of central funds for development in comparison to basic education and it has a fairly low profile both locally and nationally. Moreover, the research base for ESL (including such essential information as needs analysis) is very limited, largely due to lack of priority and lack of funding. That is not to say that development has not taken place; rather to acknowledge that it has depended on the commitment and enthusiasm of individual practitioners and a good deal of voluntary effort rather than the commitment of funds.

Undoubtedly the balance of central exhortation and local influence is likely to be one of the key topics in the next few years as the general balance between central and local government changes. Mere influence can be extremely frustrating particularly in instances where LEAs attach little priority to basic education and ESL and pay little more than lip service to the need for better resourced provision. Whilst, for example, some authorities took serious account of ALBSU's Good Practice Document on Resourcing and used this as the basis to plan and extend their provision others appear not to have acknowledged its existence. Thus, there are some LEAs whose contact with ALBSU has always been, at best, sporadic and at worst almost non-existent. Such authorities rarely send any representatives to ALBSU organised conferences and seminars (even where the Unit is paying the travel costs involved) and never seek project funding. Probably this Newsletter is the only real contact they have with the Unit.

It is often claimed of course that this is the strength of local autonomy; individual authorities can determine their own priorities, bearing in mind the needs of their own area. In principle this may be fine but in practice it is fairly hard on the

adults living in the area who lack but want to improve their mastery of basic communication skills. Our primary concern as practitioners must be with the needs of such adults and how these can be met in an effective way. Thus, where local autonomy denies the right of an individual to something as essential as language, literacy and numeracy, a different balance needs to be struck. This does not necessarily mean, however, that greater central direction is the answer to inadequate provision. This Unit, and its predecessor, have long believed that some sort of legislative basis for basic education and ESL, with agreed good practice enshrined in law, would bring about a considerable improvement in the quality of provision and do something to reduce the disparity which currently exists. This would not take away the responsibility from local government in determining how to make effective provision but would, at least, go some way to ensuring that adequate provision existed in every area, and that what did exist was adequately resourced.

It seems likely that one of the effects of the Education Bill will be to alter the ways in which local education authorities operate. It is difficult to predict, however, what effect this will have on ESL and basic education. Greater autonomy for colleges of further education may, for instance, mean that it is even more difficult to influence how provision is made. In some respects, however, this may only formalise and regularise an existing position, as in some areas LEAs have little influence over effectively autonomous colleges. Certainly it will make planning in many areas more difficult and the current emphasis on cost effectiveness (and the fairly narrow way it has often been determined) may make it difficult for resources to be allocated to non-income generating, seemingly costly basic education and ESL work. Moreover, co-ordination across a whole area rather than merely in institutions will probably be more difficult.

The renewed interest of the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) in basic education and ESL is also likely to have a considerable effect on the scale and extent of provision. At the time of writing (April 1988) it is not clear just what form language, literacy and numeracy provision will take in the new Adult Training Programme which is to begin operating in September of this year. What is clear, however, is that there is likely to be an increase in the number of providers in the next few years and this may mean that in some areas LEAs make available only a small minority of the total learning opportunities available in the area as a whole. Thus, it may be that the LEA's influence is somewhat reduced as is their ability to co-ordinate all the provision which exists in the area.

The Unit recognises that the previous efforts of the MSC in this area of education and training give cause for concern amongst some practitioners about the future. From a base of substantial, full-time, allowance paid Preparatory Courses in late 1970s, the Commission became involved in a policy to reduce this type of provision in favour of shorter, part-time, benefits only provision whilst unemployment rose significantly amongst the very groups most disadvantaged in job seeking. Whilst ALBSU understands this concern, we do believe that MSC has learned from past mistakes and is very aware of the need to ensure that the needs of unemployed adults who lack fundamental basic skills are given some priority in the new training programmes.

One of the major lessons of the past is that adults with very limited mastery of basic communication skills will need intensive provision if they are to make real progress and be able to benefit from vocational training. Mastery of this complex set of skills is not a quick or easy job; nor can it be latched on to some other existing training. Rather, basic communication skills courses will need to be established – preferably pre-entry to the mainstream programme – in every area, of such a duration and intensity that real progress can be expected at the end of a course. Moreover, these courses will need to be well planned, staffed by experienced professionals and resourced in such a way that effective tuition can take place. They will need to be clearly vocationally orientated and linked to the mainstream programme in order that effective transfer for trainees can take place at an appropriate stage.

Alongside this substantial provision, there will need to be opportunities for trainees who need opportunities to brush up somewhat rusty skills to improve them as part of the mainstream Adult Training Programme. Sometimes this will be achieved by 'buying in' expertise, perhaps from the local basic education or ESL schemes; in other cases by training existing trainers to enable them to integrate basic skills provision into their work. Finally, all of this will need to be underpinned by a framework of good practice which should be the guide for establishing any provision, whether made by a private Training Agent or by an LEA contracted by the MSC. Not only will this be essential if quality provision is to be established but it will also provide criteria for the evaluation – in a rather more in depth and planned fashion that has often occurred on the past – of basic skills training for unemployed adults.

These and other possible developments in the next few years will provide considerable challenges as well as considerable opportunities for ESL and basic education workers. If LEAs can demonstrate that they have the expertise to provide the 'dedicated' basic skills and ESL courses for the MSC at the right price, they will have a crucial part to play in the development of provision for unemployed adults. To do so they will have to prove that the LEA's basic education and ESL practitioners can develop vocationally linked provision, not because the MSC demands it but because all of the evidence indicates that this is the type of provision which will attract unemployed adults. Moreover, they will have to demonstrate that they are not wedded to traditional forms of provision but can develop alternative, open learning opportunities rather than always advocate the supremacy of the small group.

The Unit is itself taking a major initiative to provide alternative learning opportunities in Inner City areas of England and Wales, and if these pilot centres prove effective there is a possibility that they will be developed on a wider scale. Moreover, we recognise that many areas have similar problems to inner cities whilst not inner city areas in the strict sense. Initially, ALBSU's Inner Cities Initiative will be quite modest with about £300,000 in additional grant from the Department of Education and Science for three years, matched by £200,000 of the Unit's existing grant for Special Development Projects. We are also keen, however, to look towards some commercial sponsorship both nationally and locally, particularly as each centre will have an emphasis on using new technology and open learning. The development of alternative learning opportunities is not, however, to decry what currently exists but rather to recognise that different kinds of opportunities will suit different individuals. Flexibility should be, after all, the hallmark of basic education and ESL.

The pace of change in education causes both concern and optimism. Concern to preserve what we have developed in the last twelve years and optimism that a higher profile for basic education may help move basic education and ESL from the margins of continuing education to centre stage in the 1990's. A higher profile may, of course, involve rather greater scrutiny as well as a demand for evaluative measures and some rather more comprehensive information on the outcomes of provision. We have, however, little to fear from change particularly if it allows us to turn commitment and enthusiasm into a level of provision which adequately meets existing and emerging needs in every area of England and Wales.

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CORNISH COAST

PREPARING FOR A LONG BREAK

For many students the summer can be an unwelcome interruption in their studies. In this article Sue Abell, Senior Advisory Tutor for Essex, sets out a collection of ideas which could turn the summer into an opportunity for new, and stimulating work.

The majority of students in ABE Schemes receive less than 100 hours of tuition per year and many will find adult centres closed during vacation periods. Unfortunately this does mean that some students lose momentum, interest, and skills and start a new term having to go over ground previously covered.

'Distance' and 'Open' Learning provide possible solutions to this problem but they are developments viewed with distrust by some tutors. However, at a recent regional training event a few tutors decided to explore the possibilities. This article represents their views.

WHY DO WE NEED TO PREPARE FOR A LONG BREAK?

(a) Tutors and students both hope that learning will continue between sessions as well as during them but many students need some help and support if this is to be a reality.

(b) By the end of a term the group, hopefully, will have developed its own atmosphere and spirit based on regular contact and communication. It is a shame if this is lost during long breaks.

(c) Although we all believe in greater independence for students, regular contact between particular students and tutors can breed some interdependence. Long Breaks can provide opportunities for students to do things on their own.

WHAT IS OUR AIM IN PROVIDING LEARNING TASKS FOR THE LONG BREAK?

1. To provide continuity in the learning programme

2. To maintain group cohesion
3. To boost confidence
4. To encourage greater independence in learning

SO HOW DO WE TACKLE IT?

What students can and will do in the break depends upon their interests and background. But it also depends upon the habits and traditions which the tutor establishes. If homework is regularly set and used and if independence is genuinely fostered during the regular programme, the student will be used to working alone or with other students and with pacing his own work. He, therefore, won't be daunted by a programme to be undertaken from his home base.

To be most effective the tasks will benefit from:

- preparation in the week, term, or year *before*
- guidance and feedback available *during* the break
- some possibilities of *contact* with other students
- meaningful follow up *after* the break

Some ideas for students who need to develop reading skills

(a) A Reading Programme

Negotiate a programme with dates and materials. These should include worksheets as well as text and tapes if the student has access to a tape player. Materials could be sent or circulated to provide reminders and a fresh stimulus.

(b) Photo Albums

Preliminary or follow up work in class might consist of writing labels, captions, or descriptions. Students who don't have access to cameras or photos could do a similar activity with postcards or pictures from magazines. Some might like to make up a picture-story or a complete record of a holiday could be made using a mixture of illustrations and texts.

Students would make a plan of what they would produce and how they would do it:

1. *Take your own photos* – Write labels, captions, descriptions linking texts
2. *Collect photos of self / family / friends / locations*
3. *Collect post cards* — this could be a reciprocal activity — send post cards to others in the class — collect and arrange.

Pictures from magazines could be used

Phouong's scrapbook

4. *Do your own drawings.* Some student might like to compose a picture-story or make a complete record of a holiday or family event.

The illustration and text could be determined entirely by the student or the tutor might offer guidance before the break.

Follow up: These albums/scrapbooks should provide a valuable resource for teaching and learning after the break.

(c) Diaries

These provide useful practice in writing days of the week and reading and recognition of dates as well as an ideal framework for using personal vocabulary. Students could be given sheets of a week at a time. Even beginner level students could complete them with a short sentence or two. 'Prompt' words could be provided to make the task easier. This works very well well if some diary work has been done in class.

(d) Cassette Tapes

Most students have tape players and these can help if texts and tapes are provided. Alternatively, a tape with an accompanying worksheet can be a good homework device – cloze sheets can provide a precise framework for the writing of particular words. Tapes which require an oral response can be just as useful, more perhaps with ESL students.

Students can be encouraged to record their ideas, feelings, etc. They might focus on a visit of holiday. The recording could then additionally be used in class or at home as a basis for a booklet or a piece of written work.

Students could record recipes for one another to try out. This would be a good preliminary to work for giving and following instructions or writing instructions.

(e) Crosswords – Word searches

These can be made up by students in class before the break or provided from commercially produced or teacher prepared material. Themes might tie in with other Break activities, e.g. days/ months for a diary writer.

Postcards

Preliminary Activity: The class can make decisions about who will sent postcards to whom.

Follow-up: The postcards can be brought into class and used as a basis for discussions, writing, or to make into a scrapbook.

For students with fluent reading

Book Reviews:

Preliminary Activity: This could be a regular feature of class work with students reporting orally on books they have enjoyed and reviews being filed so that they are available for other students.

Guidance on writing reviews can be given gradually during the term or year so that students are very familiar with how to do it and its purpose.

The tutor and student together might identify an appropriate reading list for the holidays.

The student who needs to increase the amount and speed and writing done

- Provide gap filling work sheets
- Encourage the student to keep a diary
- See photo album
- The restaurant guide

Preliminary Activity:

1st Term

(a) Members of the group bring in any restaurant guides they have or have found in newspapers, or magazines or borrowed from libraries

(b) Discussion on eating out or special restaurants or types of restaurants or types of food

(c) Discussion on the value and use of guides

(d) more constructive criticism of guides. What do we want from a guide.

THE PLUME OF FEATHERS
(Loughton)

The Plume of Feathers is the pub the bus drivers use because the garage is next door.

Norman Hurford

THE CAMELOT

The Camelot is a good place to go for a meal as they have a children's menu which is only 99p each.

The Camelot is a public house and restaurant. It is just along the road from me and also next to the forest.

The Camelot has a very friendly feel about it and you do not have to worry about the kids making a noise. But if you want to go at night you cannot take the kids after 7pm, which is good if you would like a night out by yourselves.

Meals are a set steak and chips or salad, with ice cream or cheese. They cost from about £3.50 to £7, but wine is quite pricy from about £4 a bottle.

Marion West

Excerpts from Essex students' restaurant guide.

2nd Term

The group to design a form that would elicit the information they would like from a guide.

3rd Term

Members of the group who eat out use the form — fill it in and report back to the group who can modify the form if necessary.

During the Break: Students can encourage friends and relations to use the form as well as completing it themselves each time they eat out.

Follow-up: The guide can be completed as a group writing task and then becomes available as

- a Reading Resource
- a stimulus for discussion
- an item for sale to other students at the Centre

The Student who needs to practise handwriting

Provide a copy book for letter formation and some gap filling where particular letters need to be practised. In class beforehand the student can practise 'marking' his own work — how pleased is he with it — if he's not very pleased he probably needs to practise more frequently and could do timed sessions with the time gradually increasing.

Send post-cards or letters even if its only to the Centre to provide examples of the standard at fix d points during the break.

The Student who needs to learn certain spellings

In class the student can select and practise the strategy that is most useful and appealing. The spelling list once compiled needs breaking into manageable units, and a lesson plan designed. Access to a tape recorder will greatly enhance the effectiveness of this activity.

Possible Lesson Plan for students working alone

(a) Listen to a text containing the words to be learned — or look at them. This is easier if they are on a theme:
- January
- February etc.

(b) Practise words with LOOK / COVER / WRITE / CHECK or another chosen strategy until you feel pretty sure that you can write them accurately.

(c) Do worksheets including sentence cloze, e.g. word cloze with correct version in sealed envelope!

——— is the first month of the year.

Jan——is the first month of the year.

(d) Do dictation with tape, getting a friend or fellow student to give it.

(e) Self checking of final version.

(f) Mark yourself and keep a record of your results — if it's below agreed level, repeat the lesson doubling the time on practising and using an additional memory technique.

ESL Students with reasonable spoken English, basic reading and writing skills

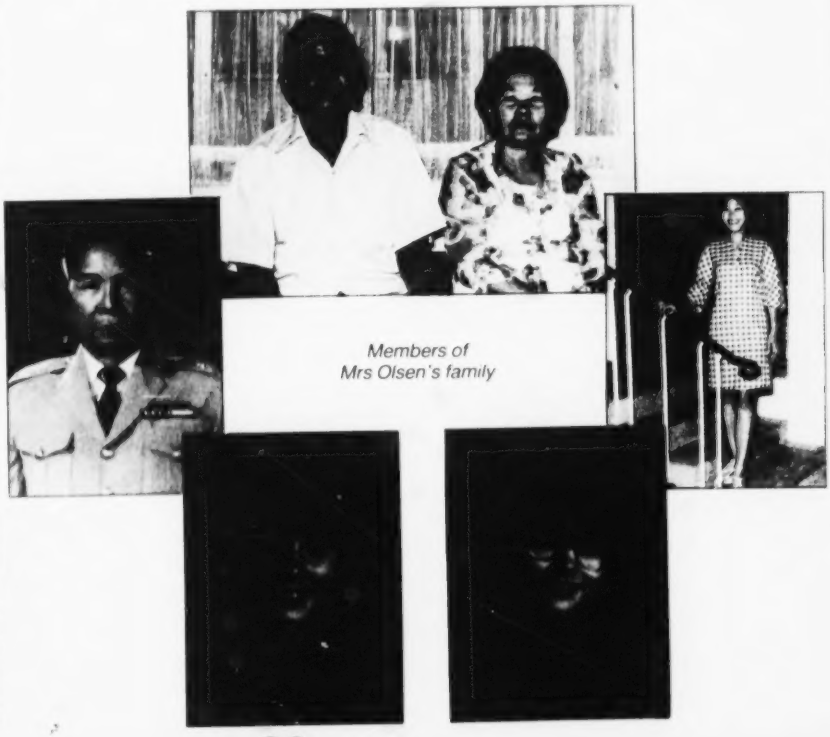
FAMILY TREE AND HISTORY

In class beforehand the tutor

Preparation: Should prepare her own family tree to show and explain its layout — (going back to great grandparents. With photographs and perhaps memorabilia).

Times change . . .

Practice exercise: A Royal family tree could be compiled by the class with pictures from magazines etc.



Members of Mrs Olsen's family

◄ *Khin and her family.*

Four generations of the De Mattos family. ►

Vocabulary exercise: Relationships. Exploration of relationships, e.g., first cousins, second cousins, in-laws.

Writing: About special events or special people in the family.

During the Break: To complete a personal family tree (illustrated if possible) and bring it back the following term to share with the group.

Morad Reohizadegan

A picture of the tutor, fifteen years ago, led Morad Reohizadegan to write about his memories *". . . At 1940 when I was eight years old I remember Second World War. I think that time was my mother in law married. In my faith we can meet together for three months . . ."*

TOWN QUIZ

Preparation:

1. If possible, spend one lesson walking around town centre and talking about it.
2. Follow up the visit in class with map work, e.g. map reading, scale and distance. A discussion of places of interest.
3. Bus services, time tables, fares.
4. The tutor could prepare a brief quiz for the class to do as an example.

During the Break: Students can prepare their own Quiz to bring back the following term for other students to do.

If possible, set it up for students to meet and work in pairs.

Pictures and photos — "Where is this?" to be included.

Value of this Work:

- Helping students to ask questions as well as answer them.
- Some students might be able to arrange to work in pairs to keep the social side going.

Skills involved:

- Map work — numeracy / literacy in scale distances etc.
- Fares — numeracy
- Reference Books — local monuments etc.
- Presentation of Quiz stick down or bring pictures, photos for "Where is this?" type of questions (use local free papers).

Follow-up: This could be individual or group free writing on anything which has specially appealed (e.g. market day, local "characters", development of town etc).

For Students who need to practise numeracy skills

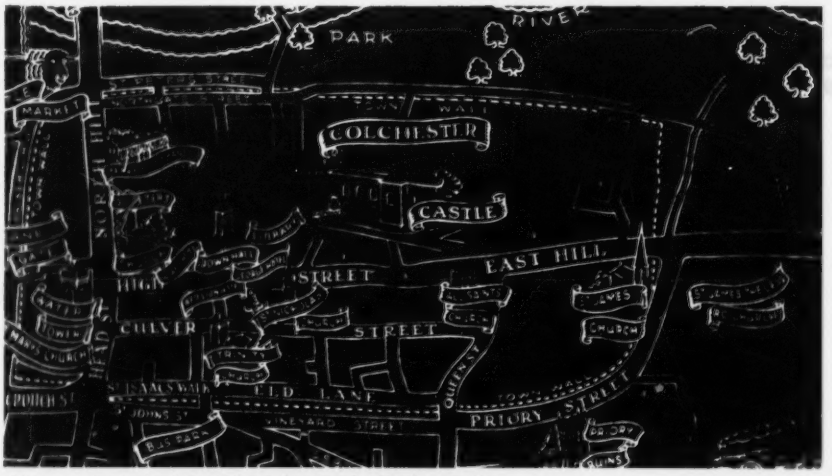
1. Weekly / monthly / holiday / Christmas accounts can be kept.
2. Cars can be the stimulus — accounts of expenditure or journey logs, budgeting etc.

The Student who needs to get ready to move on

What about a different course?

Preliminary activity: Show students video or course material for other centres, e.g. Open College Courses like Make It Count or Working Words — encourage them to tackle appropriate modules or the whole course, or they might sign on for another adult education class.

The whole group could look at the prospectus and discuss courses they would find appealing. Students might have more confidence if they enrolled in pairs.



A town quiz can lead to work on the town's development.

With many thanks to students from Essex, for lending their photographs.

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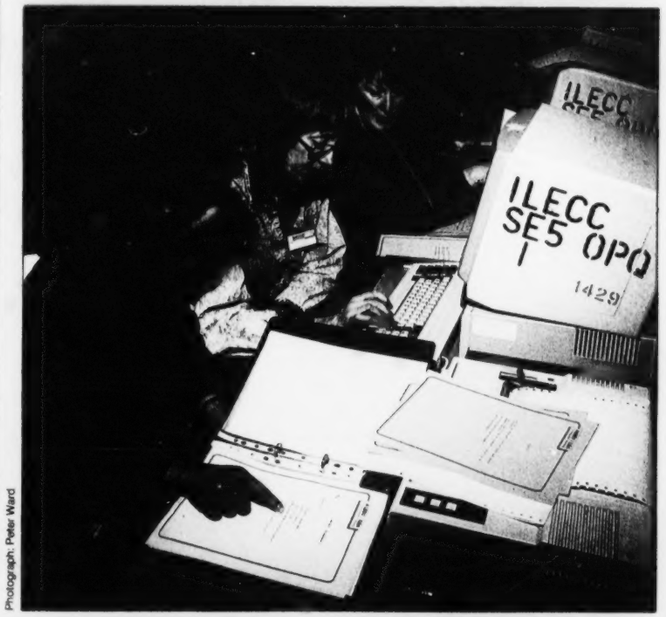
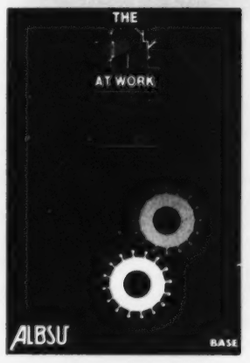


Photograph: Peter Ward

ALBSU has held two small conferences, attended by practitioners from 70% of LEA's, to disseminate the work of the ILEA Special Development Project on Computer-Assisted Learning and the Language and Literacy Curriculum. Janet Leonard, Project Worker, and teachers involved in the project, led a series of practical sessions.

ALBSU will shortly be publishing teaching materials originating from this project.

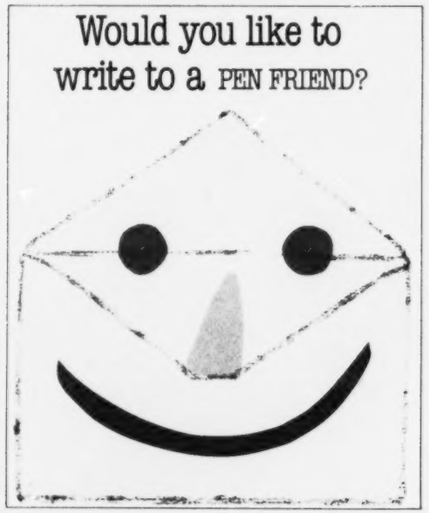
Photograph: Tony Ohnen



Over 100 employers' representatives attended a conference on Workbase literacy "The 3R's at Work", held at the CBI on 14th March 1988.

The conference, chaired by Martin Young of the BBC's Education Programme, was addressed by the Secretary of State, Kenneth Baker, Michael Bax, representing the CBI, Frances Graham (Director, Workbase) and Alan Wells (Director, ALBSU).

Workbase, with Special Development Project funding, is now undertaking advisory work on a national basis in England and Wales. ALBSU, in conjunction with Workbase, will shortly be publishing a pack of materials on Workplace literacy.



The Broadcasting Support Services has run a pen friend scheme for literacy students for twelve years, and has matched up some 3000 people.

For copies of the poster, or further details, contact: Pen Friend Scheme, BSS, 252 Western Avenue, London W3 6XJ.

ROCK BIOGRAPHIES

Twelve biographies of singers and bands of the past 30 years have just been produced by NEWMAT, a Special Development Project sponsored by ALBSU. The project aims to produce adult reading material at a basic level, and in particular to explore new subject areas – *non-fiction*, including biographies, travel, sports and *fiction* including thrillers, romances, science fiction and photo-stories.

As well as MADONNA, there are biographies of David Bowie, Tina Turner, U2, Elvis Presley, Diana Ross, Bob Marley, The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, The Sex Pistols and the Police. (45p each, £5.00 for the set).

Forthcoming titles from NEWMAT include "Dogs and Roses", a romance and "A Stab in the Heart", a thriller.

Details and catalogue from ALBSU.

Awards are on the menu
By David Berry, Education Correspondent
Cardiff, now describes himself as "a keen reader" and his tutor, Mrs Carol Sperry, says he has made
Mr Simon Pryce (left) and Mr Alan Pond receive awards from principal Mrs Mair James.
Another voluntary can-

Photo: South Wales Echo

GOOD PUBLICITY

The South Wales Echo gave extensive, positive publicity to the awards given to two students from the Friary Community Education Centre, Cardiff. The awards were for progress in studies, as well as help in the Centre's general activities. The article's profiles of the two students, and its account of the range of basic education on offer at the Friary Centre, suggest the value of news coverage which goes beyond the stereotypes of the "guilty secret" variety.

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COMPETENCY BASED ABE:

A LESSON FROM AMERICA

Wendy Cole, County Adult Literacy Organiser, West Sussex, reports on a major conference in Washington, USA.

EMPOWERING THE ADULT LEARNER

The theme was "Empowering the Adult Learner".

The publicity linked "empowerment" with discovering and pursuing learning potentials

The event was the AAACE Conference in Washington D.C. held in October 1987.

As an Adult Literacy Co-ordinator working with students, training volunteers and practitioners and from personal experience as an adult learner myself, I knew that becoming "empowered" was the vital element in learning, making the difference between uninspired slog and active participation, leading to personal growth and development.

THE CONFERENCE

The Conference was huge — it was spread over a week, over 2,000 people attended and there were 300 sessions to choose from. It was lavish — held at the Washington Hilton Hotel. It was exciting — a total experience all of its own.

But it was so formal! Given the theme of 'empowerment' this was not what I had expected. Most of the sessions were of the 'presentation' variety, there were very few opportunities to participate actively or to share experience and indeed "dialogue" seemed restricted to platform speakers.

A.B.E. IN THE U.S.A.

National literacy programmes, in nearly all cases, are competency based and may relate to life coping skills. Students are assessed, individual profiles and learning objectives drawn up, instruction is given (this may involve volunteers teaching to a script), students are reassessed and their attainments are linked to the requirements of the high school leaving certificate (G.E.D.).

The interpretation of student-centred learning is wide. In talking to practitioners I began to suspect that within this nominally student-centred approach it is the needs of the federal and state administrators for a means of measuring progress and hence of identifying value for money, of the educators for a comprehensive set of learning objectives and of volunteer tutors for a ready made, well structured curriculum, which come before the educational needs of the individual student.

COMPETENCY BASED PROGRAMMES

Competency based programmes with the emphasis on the development of specific and measurable skills have been the norm for the last ten years and are strongly upheld by the educators involved with them. Indeed these programmes are now highly sophisticated and their rationale is persuasive.

Nevertheless, despite the resourcing and despite the sophistication of the programmes, there are indications that competency based education is not as successful as it would appear.

- The numbers of functionally illiterate adults in the U.S are not declining.
- The promised economic rewards of increased literacy have not been born out: the number of Americans who live in poverty was up from 30% to 40% in 1983.
- Competency based programmes are not attracting those most in need — estimated at ⅓ of the population.
- Practitioners are exploring new ways of enabling those in most need to become literate.

That competency based programmes are not working may perhaps be attributable to the philosophy underlying education in the U.S. This is concerned with changing the skills of the individual i.e. behavioural, as opposed to a concern for the growth of the whole person. Thus American educators have defined and refined the competency statements, they have assessed and placed the students and decided on the appropriate material to be used. They have not, however, involved the students personally in their own education.

Those practitioners in the U.S. who are exploring new ways of working involve students in diagnosing their own needs, work with material of the student's choice and often of their own making. They place less emphasis on skill development and more on the ability of the students to think and learn for themselves. They also claim a high success rate.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR BRITAIN

In Britain we are living in a world where 'testing' is being introduced into our schools, where a system of assessment which can measure progress in specific skills is demanded to ensure value for money, and where competency statements and student profiles are now commonplace. It is pertinent to examine the American experience critically, and to be aware of its shortcomings.

CONCLUSIONS

ALBSU and its predecessors have done much to develop both the philosophy and practice of student-centred learning. We in Britain need to hold firm to this definition of student-centred learning, which puts the student first. In this context, used flexibly and as part of a range of strategies and participating opportunities, the use of competency statements can provide a useful tool for learning. Rather than as a programme or syllabus in themselves they can be used for example as:

- A bank of learning objectives that it may be helpful for the student to consider as part of the learning process;
- a means of self-assessment if used with a self-diagnostic rating scale;
- a means of recording skills;
- a basis for discussion with a tutor to establish learning needs and realistic learning objectives, to plan the learning and for informal formative assessment.

Without this involvement of the student at every stage of the learning process, competency based education becomes a sterile exercise which ceases to be student-centred, has nothing to do with 'empowerment' and is limited in its effect both for the individual and for society.

BILINGUAL PUBLICITY

What kinds of publicity reach members of ethnic minority communities most effectively? In this article Kanwal Pattar, an ALBSU project worker, describes and evaluates the use of bilingual publicity leaflets in Bedfordshire.

Introduction

The Special Adult Learning Programme (SALP) in Luton and in Bedford operates in urban and rural communities. Adult Literacy and Basic Skills work is provided mainly through SALP. A wide variety of provision has been offered since the mid 1970's. There is extensive liaison between Colleges, Community Education, Statutory and Voluntary Agencies, including Community Organisations.

Although SALP staff have had considerable contact with members of ethnic minority groups and have sought to make programmes relevant to their needs, it is recognised that there is a strong need to develop a process by which consultation with them is enhanced and developed into a "Responsive Process".

Developing bilingual leaflets

It was important to design bilingual publicity to help establish such a process. The Advisory Committee for this ALBSU funded project has representation from different Community groups and SALP staff. A draft introductory leaflet was designed and the contents and layout were discussed by the Committee members and the project workers. Concern was expressed that the layout and quality of translated leaflets in the minority languages should mirror the English version.

It was also suggested that inclusion of pictures of the project workers would be more eye-catching. Nine of the community languages spoken in Bedfordshire were selected for translations: Bengali, Punjabi, Gujerati, Urdu, Italian, Hindi, Chinese, Vietnamese and Polish.

Members of the Committee offered help with translations of Urdu, Punjabi, Gujerati and Bengali. Paid translators had to be approached locally and nationally for the other languages. Before printing translations were sent to be checked. The layout for the leaflets was designed by the Art department in one of the local colleges.

The Printing department in County Hall was asked to help with the printing of the leaflets. These were produced in a variety of colours, a different colour for each of the different languages.

The difficulties encountered were:

1. It was a time consuming process. It took at least two to three months to find translators. Volunteers cannot be expected to respond quickly. Checking on the progress was very laborious.
2. Only the English and Italian versions were typed as none of the other translators had access to community language typewriters. This posed a problem for the layout of the leaflets.
3. Three visits had to be made to the Art Department to discuss the possible layout for all the languages. Finally a simple (A4 Folded) version was chosen. Some of the translations had to be reduced to fit into this final layout.
4. Five visits were made to the printers to select colours, match them with languages, order paper and to collect the leaflets. The Printing Department in County Hall were, in the event, unable to print and they had to send the order to an outside printer.

Finally it cost approximately £1,037 to develop this publicity material.

Distribution

Formal and informal methods were used:

Formal: Leaflets were distributed to a variety of places including Doctors' Surgeries, Health Clinics, Libraries, Multi Ethnic Resources Centres, C.A.B.'s, Careers Offices, Bedford C.R.E. and Community Organisations.

Informal: Leaflets were distributed at places of worship, at executive meetings of community groups, consultation meetings, small and large group meetings, through Community Representatives, Family Groups, Asian Women's Forum, at the gates of Lower Schools and after school assemblies.

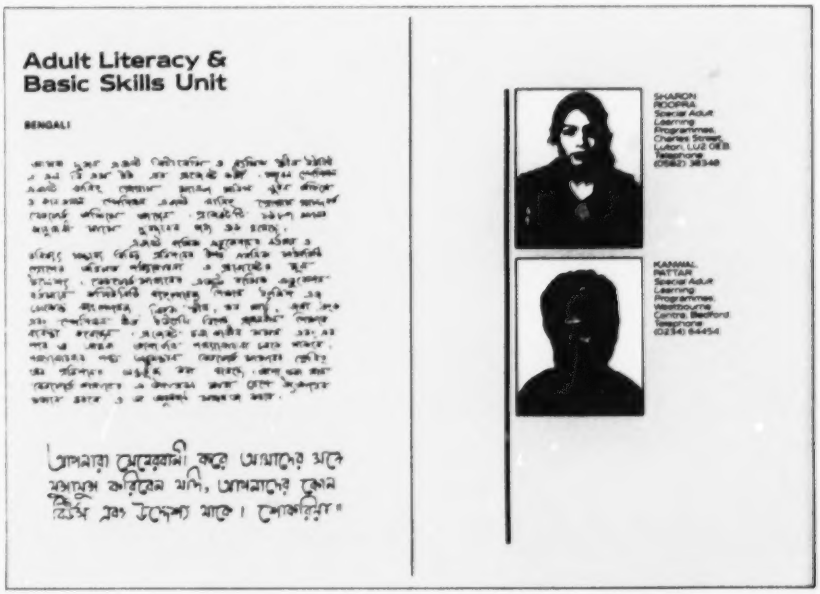
So was it all worth it?

There has been little response through the formal method of publicity. A more positive response has been received through informal publicity. Many new students have been recruited to existing SALP classes. Pilot schemes and classes have been set up as a result of consultation.

Some community groups asked specifically for leaflets only in their language and made it clear that most of their members cannot read English. At one meeting an elderly person who was illiterate in his first language came with the leaflet and asked the project worker to read it for him. A familiar language certainly is more eye-catching. Perhaps a slide tape presentation in community languages might have been better than leaflets.

Perhaps it was a mistake to print the front and back cover of all leaflets in English. (Though this was done knowingly, to minimise typesetting costs). It appears people often do not bother to open a leaflet if they cannot read the front cover. This could be one reason for the poor response while using formal methods.

On the whole this form of publicity has been quite effective in raising public awareness of the project and the provision at SALP. However, it is clear that although bilingual publicity is very useful, it needs to be combined with a range of methods to achieve maximum success.



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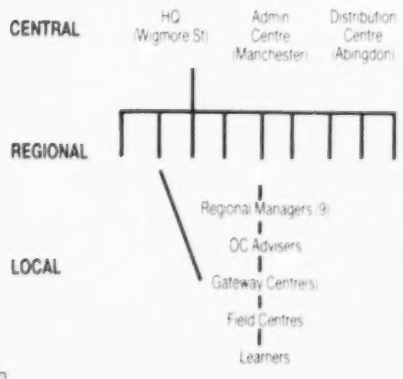
The experience of the last 12 years or so indicates that traditional patterns of provision for the teaching of literacy and numeracy have reached a near maximum size in terms of student numbers. However, all the indications are that there is a vast, but as yet untapped, market in terms of potential students. Open learning systems provide ways in which these students can be assisted to learn without the necessity of them having to enrol for definite courses set at prescribed times and locations.

THE OPEN COLLEGE

The Open College, which is a private company, is a significant provider of open learning courses. It began its operations in Autumn last year and, after a rather tentative start, the number of 'open learners' studying on O.C. courses was in excess of 20,000 by the end of this March. The variety of course packages on offer is wide and increasing with courses ranging from 'Rockbizz: Managing a Rock Band' to 'China: The Business Briefing'. Courses are primarily geared to the vocational needs of both individuals and companies and prices vary according to the nature of the package. The range of materials and support is different for each course but *may* comprise: workbooks, resource books, practical kits, audio tapes, video tapes, computer software and assignment booklets. Some courses also have accompanying television broadcasts but these are in no way essential to successful completion of a course. The basic features of all open learning systems are the possibilities for students to study at their own pace and at their own convenience but this does not preclude tutorial support. Many of the courses which lead to qualifications require this, since the tutor's comments form part of the assessment. In order to arrange tutorial support it is necessary for students to contact their local Open Access Centre. In cases where this proves difficult there is also a National Distance Learning Centre which can arrange tutorial support by post.

The Open College: Structure



THE OPEN COLLEGE

AN A.B.E. PERSPECTIVE

Terry Riley, Scheme Organiser, Nottingham, writes an introduction to the Open College, and offers a first assessment of its relevance to basic education.

OPEN COLLEGE STRUCTURE

A simplified model of the OC structure is illustrated. However, it is worth pointing out that

- both Gateway Centres and Field Centres are also known as Open Access Centres.
- in any given LEA the Gateway Centre may be the administrative base (e.g. County Hall) and the Field Centres local institutions (e.g. Colleges of F.E.)
- Open access centres are also operated by the private sector.

ABE COURSES

Two courses offered by the OC are particularly appropriate to those wishing to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

'The Writing Course' price £49.99 (without tutorial support £25.00); approximate time needed to complete the course — 30 hours. The course is intended to increase students' ability to write fluently and effectively and can lead to a qualification from the RSA's Practical Skills Profile Scheme. The package consists of a workbook, an audio tape, and assessment material. The associated TV series is 'Write On'.

'Make It Count' price £29.99 (without tutorial support £19.95); approximate time needed to complete the course — 30 hours. A course in basic numeracy to encourage confidence in handling numbers which can prepare students for the RSA Certificate in Basic Numerical Skills (Exam Paper 190). The package consists of a workbook, assignment book and audio tape. The associated TV series is 'Make It Count'.

Both these courses utilise support material which is far from new, though no doubt the Open College intends to develop other courses in the future.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

It is perhaps premature to attempt to evaluate the role of the Open College in Adult Basic Education when it is still in its infancy and has not yet developed a wide range of appropriate courses. Nevertheless, the following are some personal observations.

"POSITIVE"

There is undoubtedly a need for greater flexibility in provision. Open learning and the Open College provide this flexibility. It is often assumed that this must only apply to isolated rural areas but this is by no means the case. It is difficult to see the attraction for a student, possibly after a hard day's work, going out week after week regardless of weather to attend his or her local adult education centre. Studying in the comfort of your own home at a time you choose certainly has advantages!

Particular groups of potential students, for instance, shift workers, those with physical mobility problems, single parents where creche facilities at centres are not available may regard these courses as the *only* feasible way in which to study.

There is considerable potential for future courses to be vocationally oriented whereas existing provision, in the main, is non-specific in terms of the literacy and numeracy requirements of the world of work.

"NEGATIVE"

Tutor support can be minimal or indeed non-existent. For example a student on a course with an estimated total learning time of 30 hours, because of the financial arrangements existing between the OC and the Open Access Centres, may only receive 2½ hours of tutorial support. Other students may opt for the cheaper package and receive no tutorial support.

Many in the field of ABE recognise the importance of group work, not least in helping to break down the sense of stigma which is often felt by students, but also because of the positive educational benefits of group work.

Cost. If students can receive group, or indeed 1-1 tuition, especially where these modes of delivery can be made as flexible as possible, this would appear lower cost option for learners.

REVIEWS

Oxford Elementary Learner's Dictionary of English

by Shirley Burridge

Published by Oxford University Press

ISBN
0 19 431253 4

Price: £2.75

The E.L.D. is one of the many easy dictionaries available for beginner learners. Whilst not differing greatly from the others on the market, it does have some features worth mentioning.

The dictionary is a standard paperback, with 300 pages listing a total of about 10,000 words. The paper quality is good and the print is clear, with entries in bold type. We found it a pleasant book to handle. The word entries include useful information on idioms, irregular spellings and grammar. The pronunciation is standard phonetic with a clear key to the symbols on the inside back cover. There are numerous clear line drawings on each double spread page. All this sounds commendable, but we were not so impressed when we started using the dictionary.

We felt that the line drawings might be helpful to people who are not familiar with English vocabulary, but were mostly unnecessary and sometimes patronising, for the average adult. The space could have been put to better use by including some of the irritating omissions from the vocabulary of the dictionary.

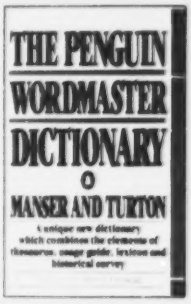
It is not an easy task, in an elementary dictionary, to provide sentence definitions which do not patronise or re-enforce stereotypes. However, we were not happy with many of the sentences used:

Please concentrate on your typing, Miss Brown. (concentrate)
Sue made a cake herself without her mother's help. (herself)
Stuart is clever at arithmetic. (clever)
Race.....people of the same sort with the same colour skin (race)

If you are not concerned by the slightly child-orientated nature of the definitions, you may find this book a useful addition to your collection of dictionaries. We were not impressed with it.

Angela Lee
Head of New College Adult Basic Education
Durham Education Authority

The Penguin Wordmaster Dictionary



by Martin Manser and Nigel Turton

Published by Penguin Books

ISBN
0-14-051161-X

Price: £4.95

If you are one of those people who enjoys reading dictionaries then you will want to add this to your collection. If you need convincing that dictionaries are interesting, or want to convince others, then I would recommend that you consider buying this one.

Apart from the usual information on pronunciation, spelling, definitions, etc., this dictionary includes elements which are usually found in a thesaurus, an English usage guide or a history of the English Language.

Each entry contains good quality definitions, cross references to other similar or linked entries, etymological information and, in many cases, a separate panel of additional information on meanings, historical development and social background. This sounds a bit heavy but is actually very readable, with information on such phrases as "to curry favour", which has nothing to do with food but has its origin in horse-grooming.

Within its 800 pages, the dictionary has entries on many contemporary issues (Aids, The Third World, GCSE) which are often missing from other dictionaries. It is also up to date with entries such as: chairman / chairwoman / chairperson.

This dictionary will appeal to both mother-tongue users and foreign students of English, providing anyone who opens it with a wealth of interesting information about words.

The only criticism I have of this value-for-money, jumbo-sized paperback is that I found it impossible to use as a standard quick reference dictionary: each time I became side-tracked into reading the panels on origin and development of common phrases. The Wordmaster Dictionary is just too interesting for words!

Angela Lee
Head of New College Adult Basic Education
Durham Education Authority

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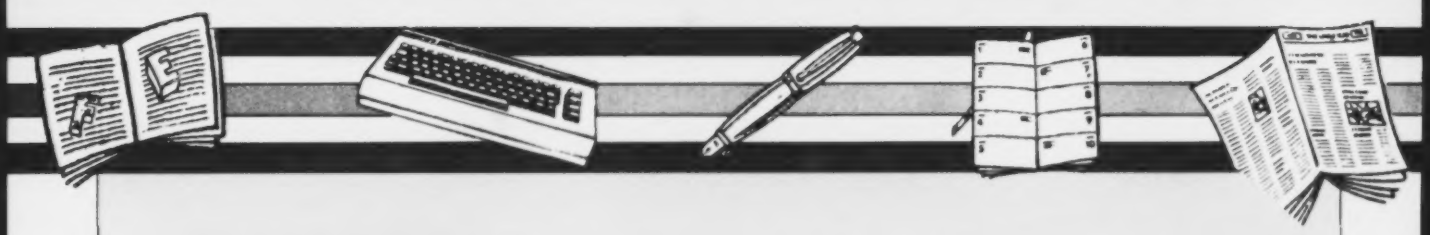

Way Ahead English

by Gareth Price

Way Ahead Maths

by Gareth Price and Margaret Le Marie

Published by Learning Materials Ltd, Wolverhampton.

Price: English — £1.55p for each of 4 books

Maths — £3.50p for a set of 7 work books (65p single copies)

Way Ahead Maths

This series consists of 7 sets of worksheets (under copyright), with the following themes:-

Facts about ourselves: (Homes, star signs, holidays etc)

Personal measurements: (Hand spans, shoe size etc)

Buying Things: (Chip shop, jumble sale, hire purchase etc)

In the home: (Kitchen design, decorating, gardening etc)

Paying the Bills: (Rent, gas, telephone etc)

Holiday Time

Getting About

The authors have shown imagination in the variety of functional maths situations they present in these packs. It is clear however that they are designed for use in schools, and because of this, the activities, functional though they may be, lack the reality of similar work based on an adult's knowledge and experience of the world. I would therefore not regard the packs as an important addition to the resources of an ABE scheme.

I also found the presentation rather cluttered, and some of the activities seemed to have been included as time fillers e.g.

"Make a list ... and collect pictures of the different types of gas appliances used in a home."

"Find out the STD codes for the following places ...."

Way Ahead English

A. Following directions
B. Writing skills
C. Collecting information
D. The Media

Each book contains ten short exercises on the skills suggested by the title, but there appears to be no logic linking the exercises or no identification of the skills involved. Again I was struck by the crowded presentation of these books, and irritated by instructions about name, date and title, all to be underlined using a ruler.

Great efforts have been made by the writers to introduce 'relevant life skills' material, but I felt that little can disguise the fact that the function of the series is as an aid to the busy classroom teacher, wishing to work on literacy / numeracy skills in a thematic / project based way.

I feel strongly that such publications are not appropriate for ABE. Anything which tempts a tutor to turn away from the student towards pre-packaged material of this kind must surely be discouraged.

Lynn MacQueen
Deputy County Organiser for ABE
Leicestershire Education Authority

The Steering Wheel Series

Signs Booklet No. 1 plus Signs Discs 1 and 2

Published by H.E. Holmes, 74 North Marine Road, Flamborough. 0262 850589

Price: £3 for the book. 2 discs at 35p each.

This small handbook contains large-scale, very clear drawings of road signs and road markings. It is devised for learner drivers to use by self-testing, or for driving instructors to use as an aid to teaching. With adult basic education students in mind, I feel it is much easier for them to study than the H.M.S.O. Highway Code. Print is clear and only a small amount of text appears on each page. It is an easier task also than that of the many "How to do it" books on driving and the driving test.

The signs are clearly described as warning signs, compulsory signs, information signs and order signs. Commonsense — What to do, or not do, instructions are also given.

The book comes with two "Signs Discs", which contain all the same information but in a different form. That is, on a rotating disc with an aperture which, when turned reveals similar information. The print here is on the small side, but it is more active and could be used as a learning game.

At £3 for the book and 35p each for the two discs I found this to be a good buy. Road signs are very essential "sight vocabulary" for us all and many students are aiming to take the driving test.

With the three parts stored together in a plastic folder it would be easy to provide whatever was needed in this area. Several colleagues liked it too.

Audrey Skinner
Basford Hall College ABE Co-Ordinator
Nottinghamshire Education Authority

Moneyspinner Guides

Edited by Derek Jones

Published by Channel Four Television

Price: Single copies available free by sending a large sae. Complete sets of ten — send £2.50 to — Money Spinner, PO Box 4000, London W3 6XJ.

The moneyspinner guides are ten booklets produced by Channel 4 Television. They are attractively set out and contain a great deal of information about personal money management. The booklets are:-

- **Insurance** — How to choose the best insurance policies.
- **Income Tax** — Explains PAYE, how to check your tax code.
- **Pensions** — An explanation of state and occupational pensions.
- **Benefits** — Describes the social security benefits and how to claim them.
- **Giving Money Away** — Explains ways of giving money to charity e.g. covenants, legacies, payroll giving.
- **Debt** — Practical advice on how to tackle debt problems.
- **Savings** — Different ways of saving money with advice about which is the most appropriate.
- **Mortgages** — Looks at the different types of mortgage, where to get one and the hidden costs of buying a house.
- **Small Investment** — Explains different types of investment and the possible pitfalls.
- **Borrowing** — How and where to borrow money, the pitfalls of borrowing and a comprehensive section on plastic money.

The closely printed format and high level of literacy required by the reader means that the information in

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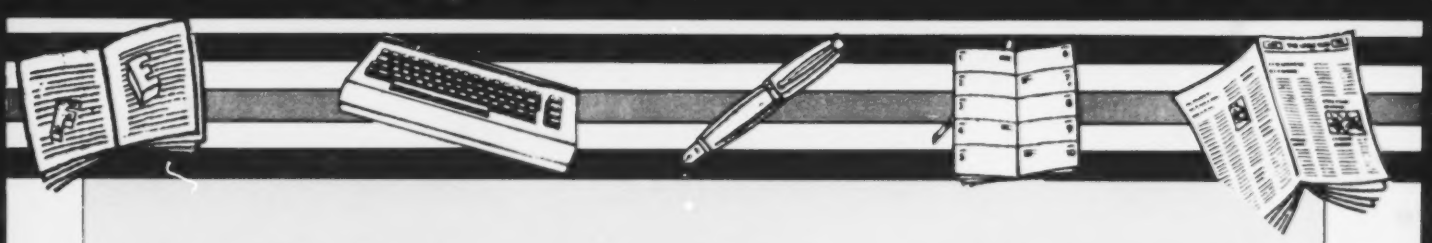

these booklets would be inaccessible to many students. However, the relatively up to date material provides a good resource for tutors and students. Many parts of the booklets could be extracted for use with numeracy and literacy groups.

Eg. — The section on plastic money is clear, informative and could be used to start a discussion on the pros and cons of credit cards and charge cards. This could be followed by written work and/or calculations about the costs of using these cards.

To sum up — we recommend these booklets as a useful resource for numeracy and literacy schemes. They could generate much interesting work for basic education students.

Jane Dobson and
Suzanne Overton-Edwards
Joint Numeracy Co-Ordinators
Haringey Education Authority

Time Watch

by Chris McDonnell

Published by Better Books (Publishinbg) Ltd, 15a Chelsea Road, Lr. Weston, Bath BA1 3DU
ISBN 09 04 700 51 8
Price: £25

This is a pack designed for use in (primary ?) schools, to give practice in the various skills of telling the time. It covers the analogue clock face, digital and 24 hour clocks, and the calendar. Included in the pack are discussion and practice cards on these topics, "fact cards", an evaluation (ie assessment) programme, and master cards for copying (for adaptation, or providing extra material). The pack is attractively presented in a ring binder, with sturdy cards, number and colour-coded, packaged in plastic wallets. Within each section, material is carefully graded and logically presented in manageable portions. Words are kept to a minimum on most cards, and a word list is appended in the teacher's booklet. Print, lay-out and graphics are uncluttered and clear.

I particularly like the section on the 24 hour clock, with the emphasis on *reading* 24 hour times and some useful methods of illuminating the problem.

Care is needed when using the earlier sections with adults. A few cards need adapting, as they relate times to activities: the school day looms large, bed-time is 7.30 and there is a strong whiff of Peter and Jane about the sentence structure.

£25 would be a hefty slice of our ABE budget for one item. But if you have a large scheme, and telling the time is a commonly recurring theme, this could be a useful resource.

Joy Joseph
Tutor Organiser ABE
Avon Education Authority

Communications Skills Series

1. Reading and Writing at Work
2. Surviving Interviews
3. How to Write Letters
4. Improve your Spelling

Published by CRAC (The Careers Research and Advisory Centre)
1. ISBN 0 86021 939 9
2. ISBN 0 86021 623 3
3. ISBN 0 86021 906 4
4. ISBN 0 86021 831 3
All paperbacks in A4 format: £3.50 + 50p p+p per title

Reading and Writing at Work: This was felt to be a flat and boring book. The text is rather dense and although it speaks directly to the student user, it would be very difficult for someone with the kinds of problems addressed in the book, to handle independently. The book's aims seemed to get rather confused in its attempts to deal with the workplace, a fairly young and inexperienced audience and many of the intricacies of the reading process itself.

Surviving Interviews: This book was generally approved by the students asked to consider it. They liked the cartoon humour and presentational style. They enjoyed several of the exercises, especially the one involving case studies which seemed to take the threat out of role play. Tutors also felt that it was a useful resource for this aspect of the curriculum, particularly in respect of pre-interview research and types of questions used at interviews for different assessment purposes.

How to Write Letters: Students found this a very accessible book containing plenty of information and practice ideas. Some of the topics used to provoke letter writing activities seemed rather geared towards a youthful readership, so might need adaptation with older students. There is nothing very new (except perhaps the agony aunt and health question letters) in the book, but it is comprehensive and students liked using it.

Improve Your Spelling: Several students did not like the cover on this book, which they thought looked very childish so making it embarrassing to purchase or carry around. Not all students liked the cartoons which, as with the other books, are interspersed throughout the text. Both tutors and students thought the book was clearly laid out, that the exercises were realistic and relevant and that the book contained many helpful tips and useful worksheet ideas.

Conclusion: The books are quite flimsy so would not stand much wear and tear without some form of protective covering. They are undoubtedly written with young people in mind and this is sometimes reflected quite noticeably in the language, cartoons and topics used. However, certainly titles 2, 3, and 4 at £3.50 each would be quite useful additions to an AE scheme's resources and clearly would be very appropriate for YTS.

Carolyn Kewley
Deputy Staff Tutor
Special Adult Learning Programme (SALP)
Bedfordshire Education Authority

Microcomputer Review

Matchmaster

by Christopher Jones

Published by Wida Software, 2 Nicholas Gardens, London W5 5HY

ISBN 1 85005 108 4 (BBC version — MSDOS for IBM compatible, including Amstrad, also available).

Price: £29.95

Wida is a company which produces a range of programs, originally for the EFL market. Their speciality is "authoring" programs, which provide a framework for teachers and students to write their own material.

Matchmaster is a good example. You set up two lists of words, phrases or sentences, anything; then you try to

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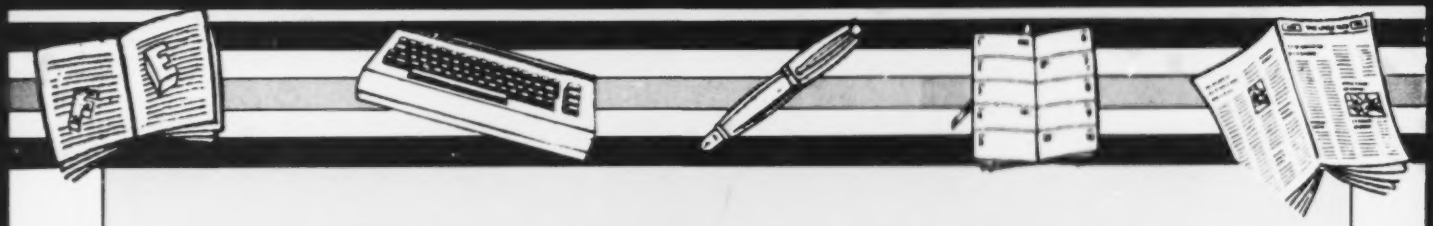

choose the item in one list which matches an item in the other. You can also play games of snap and pelmanism with the same lists.

The beauty of it is that there can be any connection you like between the matches. The examples provided with the package give some idea: opposites, countries and capitals, question and response. I have also seen upper/lower case, sums and answers, words and meanings, anything.

The package is very easy to use. You set up the lists and an introduction with a "master" disk and use a "student" disk to hold them on. The use instructions are straightforward, and you can easily leave students to run the program themselves. Matchmaster would sit very happily in an Open Learning library. You can print out the lists to use as worksheets. Students enjoy creating the lists themselves.

This is an exemplary program for Basic Education use, simple, flexible, creative. If you have made the investment of computer equipment, you deserve good software to run on it. Matchmaster, along with other good Wida programs like Storyboard 2 and Gapmaster, allows you to write suitable materials for almost any students you may have.

Chris Jackson
ESL Resources Tutor
Ealing Education Authority

The Shattered Mirror

by Violet Howard

Published by Bradford Literacy Group, Bolton Royd Centre, Manningham Lane, Bradford 8.
ISBN 0 9505669 1 8
Price: £3.50 plus £1 post and packing

Violet Howard's life story, as recounted in The Shattered Mirror, is not unlike a Catherine Cookson novel: a young innocent girl tragically led astray by a heartless man, but for whom happiness finally triumphs over tragedy.

Her early life, growing up as a child in Grimsby in poverty, is interesting but lacks the detail which would have helped the reader to gain some insight into the characters in her life and the reasons why her childhood was so unhappy. Her story moves swiftly on to the men, marriages and affairs which occur with amazing regularity throughout the book. Violet is an optimistic woman and with the arrival of each new man believes that she has found lasting happiness, but neither Ned, Syd, Noel or George provide her with what she needs. Nevertheless, at the end of the book she is able to say that she has no regrets about her life; she is clearly a strong and courageous woman.

One of my students who read the book expressed concern about the way that Violet was able to leave her two sons at various times, often when in pursuit of her own happiness. Indeed, one of the saddest parts of the book is the discovery that her young step-daughter is visiting friends' houses after school, where men "befriend" her with offers of sweets. The child is eventually sent to a Home; a sad repeat of Violet's own girlhood. Another student thought that because of certain inconsistencies in the plot and in her attitude towards her children that Violet, in spite of her apparent naivete, is a woman who does not easily draw sympathy from the reader. My students found it difficult to indentify with her, particularly as a mother.

In helping her with the book, the Bradford Literacy Group have clearly allowed the writer's voice to come through, although her style is often clumsy and lacks fluency. The dialogue tends to be stilted and is used where the inclusion of Violet's thoughts or feelings might have added more to the atmosphere. In places, repetition of details or a sudden jump in the narrative appears to show a lack of planning and organisation.

Of greater concern, I think, are the spelling and punctuation errors throughout the book. A student whose work is published ought to be aware of the conventions which apply to published writing, as well as the judgements which the public might make. However much we value our students' work, I believe we do them a disservice if we over-protect them and do not enable them to develop good quality writing appropriate to the task and to the realities of the world outside the classroom.

Maggie Nutt
ALBSU Project Worker
Essex Education Authority

Also received

Focused Maths: Book 5

by Bill Ridgeway
Published by Edward Arnold
ISBN 0 7131 7597 4
Price: £1.95

One of a series of ten books which together provide a comprehensive basic course set in a real life context.

Handling Punctuation

by John Davies
Published by Hutchinson
ISBN 0 09 160741 8
Price: £3.50

This book aims to teach basic rules of punctuation through cartoons and visual aids.

Communications in the Salon

by Shelagh Snell
Published by Edward Arnold
ISBN 0 7131 7512 5
Price: £3.95

Practical guidelines and assignments for hairdressing and beauty students.

The ALBSU Newsletter is published four times a year, in November, February, May and July. Copies are available, free, to organisations and individuals. We aim to publish articles of interest to those teaching in adult literacy, second language and basic skills, those who are responsible for funding and organising the provision, and those who are generally interested in these important areas of work.

If you have ideas on topics which you would like to see covered, please contact the Editor, at ALBSU. Reviews of relevant publications are written for the newsletter by practitioners, and we are interested to receive publications which could be useful in basic education.

Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit, Kingsbourne House, 229/231 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DA. Tel: 01-405 4017.

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SUMMER
1988

No 30

ALBSU

Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit

NEWSLETTER

Photo Eddie Maples

Organising Basic Skills through a Workshop: Chris Maples, Wakefield District College (see Insert)

NEW INITIATIVES
PAGE 2

LANGUAGE SUPPORT ACROSS THE CURRICULUM
PAGE 4

LITERACY WORK WITH 'FOURTH WORLD' FAMILIES
PAGE 5

BASIC SKILLS WORK IN YTS
PAGE 10

A COMMUNITY WALLHANGING
PAGE 12

A WORKSHOP APPROACH TO BASIC SKILLS
INSERT

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NEW INITIATIVES

A significant number of new initiatives in basic education are going to change the nature of provision in the next few years. Whatever your involvement in basic education, central initiatives and more money are likely to have an effect on your work.

OPEN LEARNING CENTRES

At ALBSU's Annual Conference at the end of May, two major initiatives were announced. Both are planned for 1989 and they are likely to have a major effect on the development of adult literacy and basic skills in the next few years.

Photo Tony Otneil

The Secretary of State, Kenneth Baker, addressing ALBSU's Annual Conference.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science, Kenneth Baker, confirmed in his opening address that £3 million of additional funding was to be made available through Education Support Grants in 1989-90 for the establishment of open learning centres in England. (Separate arrangements are likely to be made for similar centres in Wales). These centres are planned to extend the open learning centres being set up in Inner Cities by ALBSU (the first of two of which are planned to open in September 1988).

A BBC INITIATIVE

In the final address at the Conference, Eurfron Gwynne Jones, the Controller of Educational Broadcasting at the BBC, announced that a major initiative was planned for a three year period beginning in the Autumn of 1989. Although planning is at an early stage it is likely that the BBC's initiative will include peak time television programmes, a major documentary and some instructional programmes linked to local learning opportunities. It may be, for instance, that BBC programmes are complemented by other learning opportunities including some open learning in the centres established through the new central government grant.

ALBSU is particularly gratified by these new initiatives, particularly as we have been urging for some time the acceptance of basic education as a high priority in the education of adults. If the last decade and more of intensive effort has proved nothing else, it has indicated that basic education provision needs to be provided on a long term basis rather than seen as a quick 'mopping up' exercise. This renewed drive to improve the opportunities available for basic education students is particularly timely as the United Nations has designated 1990 as International Literacy Year.

These two major initiatives are clearly linked. It is futile encouraging the BBC to undertake a major commitment in basic education if local provision cannot cope. Thus, the Unit has often discouraged such an undertaking by the BBC in the last few years preferring instead to encourage the recognition of the need for additional resources for local schemes both centrally and locally before encouraging major media activity. Whilst no one can promise that the scale of resources to be made available will enable renewed demand to be coped with, the commitment made by

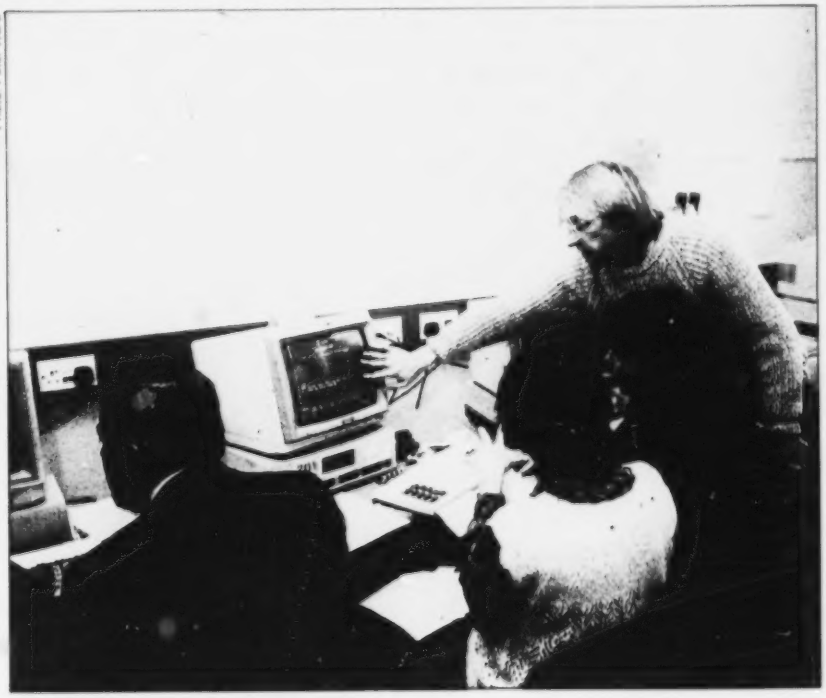

Photo Peter Ward

ILEA project: Computer-assisted Learning

central government is considerable. ALBSU estimates that between 16-18 million is spent per year (excluding MSC funding) by LEAs and voluntary organisations on adult literacy and basic skills provision and the planned Educational Support Grant will increase this funding by over 15% in 1989-90.

NEW TECHNOLOGY

Although the open learning centres to be established through Educational Support Grants will contain a range of learning resources, there will be an emphasis on new technology, particularly computers. All of the evidence available to ALBSU over the last few years has indicated that a particular problem exists in obtaining access to appropriate computer hardware. Often computers are available in theory in another part of a building or in a different college department but in practice, problems of access make it almost impossible for new technology to be used by many basic education schemes. Therefore, as new and better software becomes available many practitioners still do not have access to computers often or easily enough to make use of new programs. We have been quietly urging the Department of Education and Science to allocate increased funds to improve this situation and it is gratifying that this has been recognised this year.

Computer programs need to be good, however, if they are to be any real use. Too often programs are little more than extensions of 'hangman' and the graphics and style of the programs are either amateurish or, even worse, childish. Defending the use of such programs with adults is no better than defending the use of poor or childish book material in basic education. Moreover, computers do not teach as such and need to be complemented by a range of other materials. Where they do score, however, is in taking over the task of reinforcement from often overstretched tutors as well as in motivating adults who see themselves as having failed with traditional approaches. New technology is a complement to 'older' approaches, not a replacement for them.

As part of this initiative and the similar programme of open learning centres in Inner City areas mentioned in the last ALBSU Newsletter, the Unit intends to produce a considerable amount of learning materials for use in basic education. Some of this will be computer software but we will also continue to produce low level, high interest reading material like the recent publications produced by the Unit. We also hope in future to explore the possibility of joint publications with other commercial publishers in order to increase the range of material available in the field.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

It is disappointing, however, that this increased priority for adult literacy and basic skills is not reflected in a similar priority for English as a Second Language work with adults. Whilst ALBSU believes that many of the new learning opportunities created by increasing funding can also be made available to adults whose first language is not English, we also feel that there is a need for some specific initiatives in ESL work. The position is undoubtedly complicated by the major source of funding for ESL being Section 11 funding through the Home Office, although this does not allow for the needs of non-Commonwealth adults including refugees. Moreover, the government recently announced a review of Section 11 funding and this may provide an opportunity for those in the field to indicate the need for increased priority and funding.

ALBSU is planning a number of regional conferences later in 1988 to explore with practitioners and others how the profile of ESL work can be increased and what type of provision needs to be made in the 1990s. Certainly ESL is an area of education in which ignorance, both amongst the general public and in education itself, abounds and few people seem to recognise the differences between ESL and basic education. Whilst it is easy to blame the unknowledgeable for their ignorance it is probably more effective to explore how much we have done to improve public awareness and knowledge. Too often in education public awareness is sacrificed in favour of insular, semantic arguments that contribute little to providing high quality learning opportunities for adults.

QUANTITY AND QUALITY

Whilst these new major initiatives will present many challenges for everyone involved in adult literacy and basic skills, they will also provide an opportunity to improve the quality of provision as well as the scale of what exists. At present the quality is variable from place to place and only in a few places does the range of opportunities exist that is needed if a high quality service is to be developed. Moreover, no one can be satisfied with a service where at best just under 5% of adults with basic skills difficulties are receiving tuition and at worse less than 0.5% are in tuition. In many cases this is not due to lack of demand but rather to the lack of commitment of some LEAs in resourcing basic education.

We cannot afford to 'shy away' from setting target numbers for expanded and improved provision. ALBSU sponsored projects are already required to estimate target numbers to be reached by a project and in many cases projects are so successful that these targets are soon exceeded. Moreover, a number of LEAs are already setting targets as part of a Development Plan. (Bradford is a notable example) whilst also ensuring that development improves the quality of existing provision. If we take full advantage of the new opportunities created by increased funding the next decade could see a real expansion in the scale of basic education provision in England and Wales, as well as a dramatic improvement in the choice of learning opportunities available to any adult.

Photo Peter Ward

Using new technology in Cardiff.

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LANGUAGE SUPPORT ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

What contribution can Language Support Work make, to open up mainstream Adult Education more effectively to adults whose first language is not English? In this article Purna Sen, project leader on the ALBSU Special Development Project based at Islington AEI in London, outlines initial work and issues raised by that work.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

English Language Support

Before the project there had been concern amongst students and ESL tutors and organisers at the limited opportunities for bilingual students to participate in the mainstream of adult education. A student's level of English may be given as the reason for not admitting them to a particular course. Language support is essential to removing this block and promoting a positive attitude and a practice that will enable them to participate in all aspects of the Institute's programme.

One result envisaged is a major curriculum shift from one which is solely skills based. Tutors and organisers in departments other than ESL will need, not only to open their courses to bilingual students, but to be more aware of the languge element of their courses.

Aims of Project

This project aims to develop the adult education curriculum so that all students can learn any subject, through the following methods:

- the offer of language support across a wide range of courses
- the surveying of those presently in ESL provision to identify those wanting language support and on which courses
- the training of tutors in collaborative preparation, teaching and evaluation, using multi-lingual approaches
- the training of teaching and non-teaching staff in counselling skills and admission procedures so as to ensure good access for bilingual students

PROJECT WORK TO DATE

There are three main issues which are connected with language support. These are:

- Access to the curriculum for bilingual students who have previously been excluded
- *Progression* from traditional areas of the curriculum (e.g. ESL) to the "mainstream"
- *Participation* and successful learning once the student has joined the "mainstream"

The work of the project can be considered under several different headings.

Individual requests for Language Support

These have come from various people who are aware of the availability of language support in the Institute, and/or those who have been in contact with the Project.

Survey of Staff and Students in Northern Area

The project has undertaken a survey, through questionnaires, of all staff and students in the Northern area of the Institute. The survey was an exercise in information gathering aimed at discovering:

- where bilingual students are in the Institute
- whether or not they find written and/or spoken language difficult
- whether or not they want language support
- whether or not the tutors are aware of the presence of bilingual students in their classes
- whether or not tutors are aware of the availability of language support
- whether or not they have had experience of language support
- whether or not they want language support for their course(s).

Training

The project has so far provided one training session for teaching staff, and another for non-teaching staff. A larger training programme is planned for the second year of the project — details will be available in a future newsletter.

Institute Language Policy

Project workers have collaborated with Institute staff to develop a language policy. This has been written and put to the Academic Board, where it was approved and included as a part of the Equal Opportunities policy.

FINDINGS AND FUTURE PLANS

It is too soon for conclusions to be reached, but indications may be given as to the direction of future Project work.

Language Support

The project will continue to respond to individual requests for language support so long as a variety of models are employed. A language workshop is a model which the Project hopes to develop and report on in the future. Language support workshops are planned for next year, to which students and staff will be welcome.

Counselling

The Project workers are available to provide educational counselling to bilingual students and this provision will be continued in year two.

Non-teaching Staff

Office staff are often the first point of contact for new students and therefore are put in the position of being gatekeepers for courses. Liaison with office staff is an important area of work for the project and it is hoped that some work on language and cultural awareness can be done with them.

Difficulties

There are several problems inherent in the nature of language support work, which have been confirmed during the work of the Project.

One feature of work with bilingual students is that there is a confidence-raising element to language support work. Students may feel shy or awkward using an unfamiliar language, especially in public. This may result in a lack of class participation in terms of student interaction and student-teacher interaction.

The language support tutor may not be able to determine at the start of his/her work the nature or duration of that work. The subject/skills tutor may not be willing to accommodate the work or recommendations of support staff, or the working relationship between the two may be difficult.

If there are a small number of students being given support the language support tutor may lack a focus for his/her work if those students leave the class.

The nature of language support work is uncertain: the support staff can be made few promises about the length of employment or the type of work.

These are problems and issues which the Project has come up against in its first year.

The sewing workshop at Frimhurst

Photos: Peter Ward

LITERACY WORK WITH "FOURTH WORLD" FAMILIES

In this article Stephen Baker, ATD Fourth World volunteer, describes the principles which guide literacy and basic skills work at ATD's family centre in Frimhurst. He describes how adults, who are among the most disadvantaged in the country, plan and evaluate basic education at the Centre.

INTRODUCTION

This article describes some of the lessons drawn from recent literacy and basic skills approaches adopted with some of the country's most disadvantaged adults and their families by ATD Fourth World in Frimhurst, a family centre on the Surrey-Hampshire border.

For 30 years, the ATD Fourth World Movement has identified with very disadvantaged "Fourth World" families and communities in Europe, North America and more recently Africa, Central America and Asia.

The purpose of the Movement's work is to involve all sections of society in placing the people who face the worst accumulation of insecurities, and the denial of basic and natural rights that ensues, at the centre of local, national and international concern.

Education, training and representation are the basis of all ATD Fourth World's programmes, which very disadvantaged people themselves are instrumental in planning and evaluating. Close links between ATD Fourth World branches in different countries provide considerable experience and understanding of the participation of disadvantaged and unskilled people in education and training programmes.

A PARTNERSHIP

How is it possible to build a partnership with people who lack even the most basic educational and social skills, who live in the most precarious financial situations and who spend their lives in the worst housing estates and ghettos?

How is it possible to build projects with people who feel condemned for not working and educating their children, and who are shamed daily by the disinterest, or out-and-out rejection of the community at large?

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How can a basic skills worker establish contact with people he or she has always wanted to reach and yet whose places on literacy projects have often been filled by more able and dynamic students?

WORKSHOPS AT FRIMHURST — THE SETTING

ATD Fourth World's work in the United Kingdom has its origins at Frimhurst Family Centre in Surrey where, since 1957, the most disadvantaged and vulnerable families from throughout the country are welcomed for short stays of up to nine months.

Confidence building and learning the essential skills in bringing up a family and in participating in society have always been part of life at Frimhurst.

But in 1983, with the help of a Development Grant from the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, we began to open Frimhurst up to unskilled adults from some of the local towns and villages.

Together with the resident parents, they laid the foundations of literacy and numeracy classes, a wood workshop, sewing evenings and a training building site.

Learning is family orientated as Frimhurst provides an ideal setting for adults, young people and children to learn together. In Frimhurst, we discover the effects and challenges for a whole family resulting from a parent developing new skills, and the inter-dependence of children and parents being involved in the learning process.

Since 1983, 326 adult participants have been involved in this, as students, helpers, teachers, as creators of provision aimed at those with the fewest skills.

LEARNING TOGETHER

The lessons or principles we describe below have not been learnt lightly. They represent a tentative conclusion to five years involvement at Frimhurst, during which time members of ATD Fourth World have lived and worked alongside Fourth World adults and their families.

Principle 1

The starting point is the question: What do we know of these individuals, these families with whom it is so hard to involve?

What do we know of their disadvantage, their fears of failure, or their exclusion from the world around them? What do we know of the concern that lies beneath the bravado of the young unemployed, of the shame behind the protestations of young parents being told they are incapable of educating their children?

What do we know of the ambitions and aspirations of people who seem never to

The new workshop

give up completely, who can walk miles a day to look for useful occupation or employent, and whose faith in the future seems to be reflected in the joy of each new birth?

We have learnt, first of all, that these members of [illegible] have to be our teachers. It is Martin [illegible] who reveals his humiliation at not being able to occupy himself and having his own children condemn him as useless; Sally who at 22 stays away from a literacy class because she cannot face explaining herself to other students who are much younger; Tom who tells us how parents feel forced to conceal their lack of basic education the day their children first bring books home from school.

Yet it is 20 year-old Michael who displays his commitment to working when he crushes cardboard boxes with his feet for eight hours a day when he suffers from insteps damaged by an accident for which he was never treated.

And it is Jim and Sue whose commitment to learning is seen in the courage they find to overcome their own fear of school, and in the tenacity with which they seek a better schooling for their daughter: "Just because both of us have had difficult lives, it doesn't mean our Patricia's going to. People say we will never do much, but she will, she will have the best."

And it is Gary who displays his concern for the future of his younger brothers and sisters when he gets a neighbour to write down his poem for them called "Let numbers be your friends".

Making these people our teachers of their experiences, fears and ambitions is the first and vital step. This understanding obliges us to encourage and react in a different way. We discover the rapid and sometimes drastic changes that take place in disadvantaged people's lives, and the many changing obstacles they have to overcome, and the time it takes, for them to commit themselves to a learning programme.

Principle 2

Visitors to the workshops at Frimhurst often ask: "Who's the tutor here?" It is a question that introduces our second principle.

This is based on what is known about people's past experience of learning. People whose failures in life have often been the source of humiliation and rejection will rarely seek to put themselves in a situation where they are the only ones who need to learn, and therefore the only ones risking failure.

It is a reciprocity, the exchange of sharing of knowledge and expertise, the mutual placing of our competence and our weaknesses on the table for all to see, which we discover has to be at the heart of our approach to learning.

Our literacy classes have at different times involved volunteers from other countries, all needing help with their own spoken and written English. There has always been an English teacher in the background, but it is they who have best encouraged respect for one-another's knowledge, and one another's lack of it.

In the small woodwork room, the plans for making a table, a cupboard or a stool are not produced by Mike the woodwork teacher from his file of drawings. They are instead found in the plans book initiated by the adults themselves and in which they have recorded what they have done and how they have done it. Instructions and drawings are accompanied by notes of mistakes that can and have been made...

> *". . . so that people who have even more difficulty than us in reading and knowing how to do things can also learn to follow plans."*

On the building site, where a beautiful new workshop is being built by the parents

themselves, it is not the local contractor who delivers 100 tons of ready-mix concrete. It is the adults and young people who decide to mix the concrete on site, so that they can meet and involve lots of other people in the success of laying the foundations together and of recording...

> *"...so we can see what we've done and how we've done it!"*

The building supervisor is there, of course, to advise on quantities and techniques, but it is the men and women who have always shied away from pushing a wheel-barrow for fear of falling with it who explain how to load it and how not to overdo it!

This sharing of knowledge approach, by no means an original one, works because people are committed to it, and because the project workers, and the voluntary helpers who assist them, are trained to highlight first and foremost the competences and experiences of those who are least likely to succeed.

One of the voluntary workers at Frimhurst wrote this about his involvement in the project:

> *"You taught me what lies in simple gestures, and how important welcoming is. I am inclined to complain, but I noticed that the adults who carry with them the heaviest problems can bring help and joy to others. Because of you, I know some questions about life, about family life, are too painful to be talked about. The project has taught me the meaning of friendship and respect."*

Principle 3

We have discovered from the adults that the purpose of learning for many is to push open the door towards the world of training, work and independence, a world in which their contribution has yet to be recognised.

The more disadvantaged someone is, the greater the paradox they experience of being misunderstood and mistrusted by people and of having to depend on everyone — neighbours, social security clerks, job centre staff, for everything. Money, the secure tenure of a home and work all come from other people and rely to a frightening extent on their kindness and humour. Everywhere, they have to ask: for money, for a home, for work and for help.

It is learning, training and finding work that they see as the path towards freedom from the worst effects of all this: work that they see as a public sign of their willingness to support themselves and others; work that symbolises their wish to contribute to society and to see that everyone has a place in it.

It is the aspiration to free themselves from dependence on others in this way, and to be heard and respected, (and for parents, to help their children do the same) that is a principal force behind their wish to learn and train. Knowing this guides our choice of programme, our selection of material, and the short and long-term aims we set.

For example, it means relating our learning and training to the changing patterns of employment and training in the UK, to the increasing use of computers in society, and also to the opportunities, challenges and risks that the most disadvantaged people face in a free Europe of 1992.

Coming together to learn to read and write is complemented by providing occasions to learn to think, speak, discuss and represent themselves and one-another publicly. Our Fourth World Evenings, a kind of University of the Poor exist for this, in the UK and in other European centres.

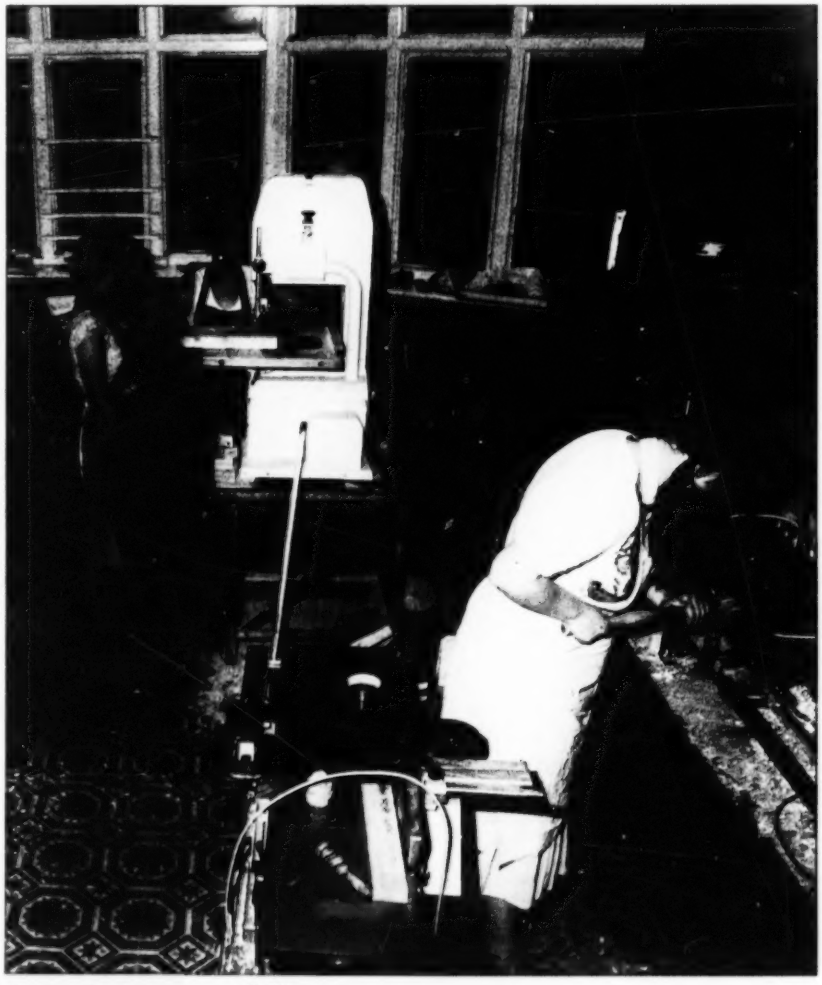
THE PROJECT'S FUTURE

With the support of local statutory and voluntary organisations, of the job centre, of local employers and trade union representatives, the adults and young people who are involved in the literacy and basic skills work at Frimhurst are building a new centre that will be completed towards the end of 1988. Then the decorating, equipping and launching of the new centre will go ahead.

We invite our fellow-literacy and basic skills workers to come and visit Frimhurst, to share their experience with us all and to help reinforce our common efforts to ensure that the least skilled participants themselves are the front-runners in all we do.

If we can achieve this in the new centre, then Frimhurst might helpfully reflect the kind of provision that could be adopted with other very disadvantaged groups and communities, and the choice of priority we have to make to achieve this.

The choice we make about our priorities is up to us, but in the long-term, it is the least skilled participants themselves who will best judge our success.



The woodwork room

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Information

Words for Basic Maths

"Words for Basic Maths" is a set of 24 cards which provide translations of a list of commonly used mathematical terms in 12 community languages: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Greek, Gujerati, Hindi, Italian, Punjabi, Spanish, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese. This set was developed as part of a Special Development Project on Independent Learning which was sponsored by ALBSU. The list could be used to check the existing knowledge of bilingual students and assist in the planning of a programme of work which would involve the students.

Available from ALBSU **Price £2.00**

Postage: 1 copy 24p; 5 copies £1.00; 10 copies £2.00.

Spelling it out

The new BBC Series starts in October this year, and the eight programmes run through until December.

AIMS OF THE SERIES

- to offer to a general BBC 1 family audience in peak time on Sunday evenings a variety of attractively presented approaches to English spelling.
- to demonstrate that spelling is not an isolated skill but is integrated with reading and writing.
- to explain how English spelling originated.
- to show why correct spelling matters.

AND AFTER THE PROGRAMMES

The BBC is working closely with ALBSU to enable the programmes to maximise their effect. The following support materials and service will be offered.

- ***a telephone referral service*** organised by the Unit for England and Wales, with similar arrangements for Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- ***posters and promotional leaflets*** for local centres to promote the series and classes available.
- ***Spelling Tips*** Available in September **free** a twelve page leaflet to be distributed to viewers after the programme giving ideas and practice to *improve spelling*, guidance about *dictionaries* and some helpful advice to dispel some of the *myths* that exist about spelling. Copies will be available to schemes in September.

Possible and Probable Spelling

If you are unsure how to spell part of a word, it may be helpful to have some idea of the *possible* and *probable* way to spell it.

QUESTION: Which is the most likely spelling? inportant important

ANSWER: IMPortant because hardly any words being inp....

Check for Yourself in any Dictionary

- How many words begin with inp.....?
- How many words begin with imp.....?
- Get into the habit of noticing spelling patterns
- Keep lists of common/possible spellings
- Get to know which spellings are probable

- ***Computer Software* – £14.95.** *Available in October from BBC Enterprises*
  An ALBSU/BBC Enterprise program based on the popular programme, "Developing Tray". The program will have over 60 texts, around different themes. Students will be encouraged to practise the strategies learnt during the series in a practical setting.
  Although designed to accompany the BBC TV series, the software will be of use in its own right.

- ***Spelling It Out*** – *a BBC Workbook* **£2.95**
  A workbook written by Rhiannedd Pratley which gives advice and lots of opportunities to practise the strategies suggested for dealing with spelling problems. Available from bookshops from early October 1988.

Section B1 Sounding It Out – the Don'ts and Do's

"Sounding it out" is the method most widely used by poor spellers when they're trying to spell a word they don't know. For many people it's the only method they know. They can get 'hooked' on it, not knowing what else to try.

Unfortunately it's a very unreliable method. If you depend on it as your *only* way of tackling new words you'll have a lot of problems!

The next few pages will show you why it's not safe to rely on the sound of words to give you the spelling. But there'll also be some hints for when it's fairly safe to use the sound for at least some of the letters.

Why doesn't "Sounding Out" always work?

Because there is *no reliable connection* between the way we pronounce words and the way we spell them.

- it may work for some words
- it may work for parts of many words
- but you can't rely on the sound to give you the spelling of the majority of words you need for everyday use.

Why will happen if you rely on sounds?

If sounding out is your *only* method of tackling unknown words you are doomed to failure.

- your spelling will look peculiar
- you will be convinced that spelling is even more illogical than it really is
- you will feel frustrated and will probably be reluctant to write

- ***ALBSU Spelling Pack:*** **£2.50.** *Available in October.*
  A pack of worksheets, discussion material, and advice about spelling for students and tutors in groups or 1:1 *at all levels.*

3 New Readers

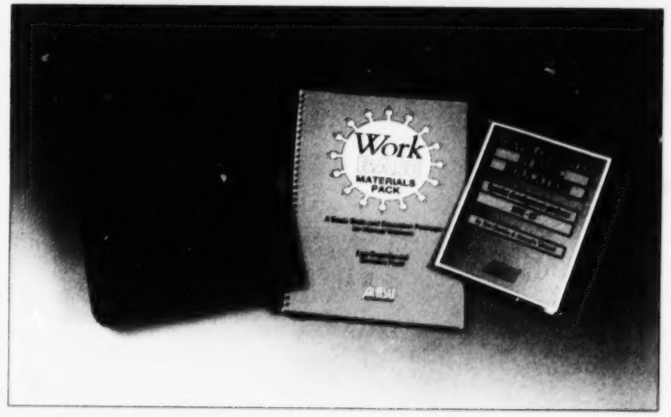
The latest titles in the ALBSU New Readers series:

The Real McCoy by *Frank Forde, Lesnah Hall and Virginia McLean*, from Peckham Bookplace, is an A-Z of black people in Science and Technology.
£1.30.

Stab in the Heart by *Mike Wilson* from NEWMAT, is a thriller set in 1940s America.
£1.25.

Cockney Adonis, by *Kate Dowdall*, from Peckham Bookplace, tells of a love affair never to be forgotten.
£1.25.

New Publications



Workbase Materials Pack

This pack is a selection of worksheets, illustrating the methods and approaches of basic education courses for manual workers. Each example includes helpful advice for tutors.
Price £3.50

Developments in Basic Education *Special Development Projects 1978-85*

"Developments in Basic Education: Special Development Projects 1978-85" by Alan Charnley and Alexandra Withnall, provides an analysis of the Special Development Projects sponsored by ALBSU and its predecessors since 1978. Although commissioned by ALBSU the book provides an independent appraisal of the issues raised by the experience of almost a decade of centrally funded initiatives.

Word Processing for Literacy Skills
by Lynette Oliphant
(BBC version for Wordwise and Wordwise plus)

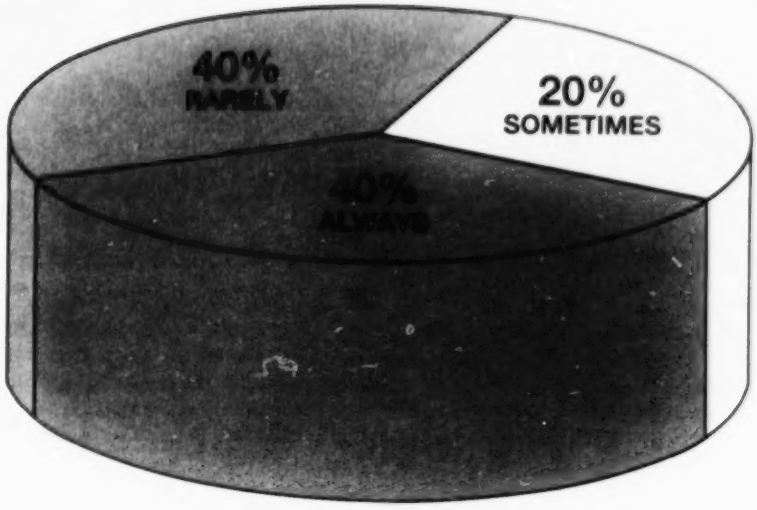
This pack of materials and software provides a useful companion to "Word Processing and Language Skills" by Janet Leonard. It can be used either to develop language and literacy skills using the wordprocessor, or to learn basic word processing techniques.
Price: £12.00
Postage: 1 copy £2.00; 5 copies £3.10; 10 copies £4.70.

Paired Reading Conference

The fourth national conference will consider research evidence on Paired Reading from the Kirklees Project. It will also review different applications of paired reading and other techniques for parental involvement and peer tutoring, in reading and other curricular areas.
Saturday 12 November 1988
Dewsbury College, West Yorkshire
Details from Paired Reading Project, The Oastler Centre, 103 New Street, Huddersfield HD1 2UA. Tel (0484) 535315 ext 217.

BASIC SKILLS WORK IN YTS

Contacts between those working in basic education with adults, and those who cover many of the same areas in organising and teaching basic skills in the Youth Training Scheme, have been relatively limited. In this article, Dr Tom Wood, head of YTS work at Swinton Adult Centre, Salford, gives a personal view of their basic education work with young people.



Self reported "chool attendance in 5th year, among Premium YTS trainees"

Introduction

The Youth Training Scheme, now come of age as a quality two year training scheme, offers a second opportunity for the provision of basic literacy/numeracy skills for young people who have for some reason reached 16 years plus with limited proficiency in these areas.

Many of these young people with limited literacy/numeracy ability have failed repeatedly at school, and often have a record of very poor school attendance. In a recent survey[1] of a group of premium-funded (ie extra funding for the training of YTS trainees with special needs) YTS trainees carried out by this Centre, we found that 40% of the trainees reported that they had rarely attended in their final school year, and a further 20% reported that they only attended "sometimes".

Asking young people with this background to write or to carry out the most simple calculations is asking them to face up to repetitions of the humiliating failures which they have suffered in the past. Trainees often respond to requests of this nature by point blank refusals — delivered with varying degrees of ill-grace! Pressure on trainees to take part in any exercise involving these activities, often results in the trainee's absence due to "sickness" on days when these activities are scheduled to occur eg College-based off-the-job training days.

Different needs, and responses

In general we have found that trainees with limited basic education skills can be classified into two types:

a) those trainees who are prepared to identify their lack of adequate literacy/numeracy as a problem for which they require help, and

b) those trainees who, as part of their YTS Training Programme, are placed in the situation where their literacy/numeracy skills are shown to be inadequate for the task in hand.

Our response to the first type of trainee has been to take them into a group of similar trainees and to proceed along traditional lines, for perhaps three or four hours per week, part of which will be carried out as individual tuition. In many cases we have carried this out on the managing agents' premises.

The second type of trainee is more difficult to help, since they have not expressed any concern about their limitations, other than perhaps being reluctant to carry out activities involving reading, writing and numeracy.

If, by a variety of methods, they are persuaded to carry out an exercise it is clear to see why they were reluctant in the first place, since their writing is often near undecipherable, and the spelling has many idiosyncratic forms.

In order to persuade these young people to take part in exercises involving basic educational skills it is necessary to ensure that the trainee can identify the instrumental advantages of the possession of these skills — that is: they need to see the relevance of the exercises being carried out.

In the survey quoted above 30% of the trainees expressed a disinterest in school certification — most often stating that they felt that the certificates they might have achieved would not lead them to jobs. Many said they had taken exams and not bothered to find out what the results were. Thus trainees need to see the relevance of the literacy/numeracy skills to the lives which they lead *especially* the relevance to achieving jobs which, despite the indifference which is often displayed by low achieving YTS trainees, is still a goal which they covet.

Unless these relevances are established the disruption caused by low achieving trainees can cause problems for all concerned. Nevertheless, the very presence of trainees on schemes — these hard bitten school refusers committing themselves to regular attendance and work disciplines — indicates that at some level they feel that there is something in it for them. Their attention span, however, and their levels of resolve, render them very vulnerable to peer group misbehaviour — behaviour which they colloquially describe as "mucking about".

In the individual counselling sessions which follow these incidents of "mucking about", it often becomes very clear that, despite their wishes to make progress, the limitations of their impulse control allow the juvenile misbehaviours of their (abbreviated) schooldays to reappear.

Planning effective training

Perhaps the most valuable training that can be offered to these trainees, in order to help them with their basic education, is to help them to develop improved impulse control, so that they can pay attention to the task in hand for increased lengths of time. This involves setting up agreed training programmes which will help them make progress with their self-discipline. When written down these programmes will in themselves constitute an opportunity to train on functional literacy.

If these trainees are to make progress they have to be helped with their motivation, they need to see the advantage *for themselves* consequent on their own efforts to improve their skills in *specified* and *mutually agreed* ways.

This means that any and every opportunity needs to be taken to help them with the everyday tasks of being a YTS trainee — it is too easy to slip out of the role of trainer and take on the role of carer — to carry out tasks for the trainee, eg "can you find the doctor's number for me?"; "write there what you want for dinner", at which point we can all too easily slip into the caring role and carry out the tasks for the trainee, rather than carrying out the trainer's role and helping trainees to achieve for themselves.

Vocational relevance

It also means that training needs to be related to the real world of work as experienced by the trainee. One of the ways we have approached this is to encourage trainees to take up a City & Guilds 362 Communication Certificate at Level One. This provides trainees with the opportunity to carry out a workplace related assignment at a level appropriate to their basic education skills. It also provides the opportunity to work on the signs and symbols which are used in the vocational environment in which the trainee is occupied. In addition individual programmes need to be designed to assist the trainee to cope with the literacy/numeracy components of their work placements. At its most basic this involves the identification of the words of their vocational area, the meanings of the words, their use and the importance of spelling them correctly — not necessarily *memorising* how the words are spelt, but recognising the need to go to a model of some sort to ensure that the spelling is correct.

Certification

The importance of seeking out certification which is within the range of limited ability trainees cannot be over-emphasised. Unfortunately too many certificate programmes disadvantage limited ability trainees by demanding literacy skills beyond their levels of proficiency — despite the fact that the young person may have the necessary vocational skills. In the time available it is very difficult to provide a great deal of help for these young people disadvantaged by examination systems. It has to be borne in mind that trainers working with YTS trainees — especially off-the-job trainers — have only a limited period in which to train, a period which precludes ambitious long-term development.

There is the possibility, however, that the increased interest in basic education being shown by the MSC for STN (Special Training Needs) youngsters may lead to a situation in which YTS trainees can utilise a substantial part of their training to improve their basic education skills. We have found that when this off-the-job training is being carried out within a college, even for limited lengths of time, the trainee gains from the prestige of being accepted into a college and we have had successes with trainees who even after leaving their schemes have continued to attend appropriate basic education courses — a major step forward for school refusers.

Cautionary notes . . .

There are, however, some cautionary notes related to new staff who are becoming involved in providing basic education through the YTS initiative. It is too easy to assume that trainees with limited literacy/numeracy skills are in that position because the school did not do its job, or that trainees did not make a proper effort etc. But in many cases there are other reasons why learning has failed to be effective. In particular, lack of proficiency may be the result of specific cognitive deficits, for example what is "obvious" and "plain to see" by those with normal cognitive processes, may not be at all obvious for those whose learning processes are impaired. It is not easy for inexperienced tutors to identify and come to terms with the limitations of, and aberrations of, cognitive deficits.

It is a major hazard that possible cognitive deficits will be completely ignored, on the assumption that any performance deficit simply needs more of the same — more tutoring — more effort — same programme, regardless of whether that programme is appropriate or not.

The danger is that totally untrained YTS staff may be encouraged to carry out basic education. Though the new MSC[2] catalogue of literacy and numeracy materials is a valuable asset to inexperienced tutors who are setting out to provide basic education training, it needs to be borne in mind that there is more to the training process than having access to professional materials!

Thus it is essential that expert assessment takes place prior to embarking on a programme of training for YTS trainees with literacy/numeracy deficits.

The tutoring of premium-funded YTS trainees in basic education is a specialised activity with many setbacks, particularly the discontinuity of training consequent upon the often chaotic domestic lives of these young people. It is, nevertheless, a source of satisfaction for tutors that they have been able to assist the development of young people in those skills which have been major problem areas in their lives.

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1. Certification of Low Achieving YTS Trainees. A Local Quality Initiative Report prepared by Swinton Adult Education Centre (1987). Copies available from MSC, Manchester Central Area Office, Boulton House, Chorlton Street, Manchester 1.

2. Literacy & Numeracy Materials — A Guide (1988) Copies available from MSC, Moorfoot, Sheffield, S1 4PQ.

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A COMMUNITY WALLHANGING

A Joint Project between Leeds Basic Education Team and the Yorkshire Art Circus

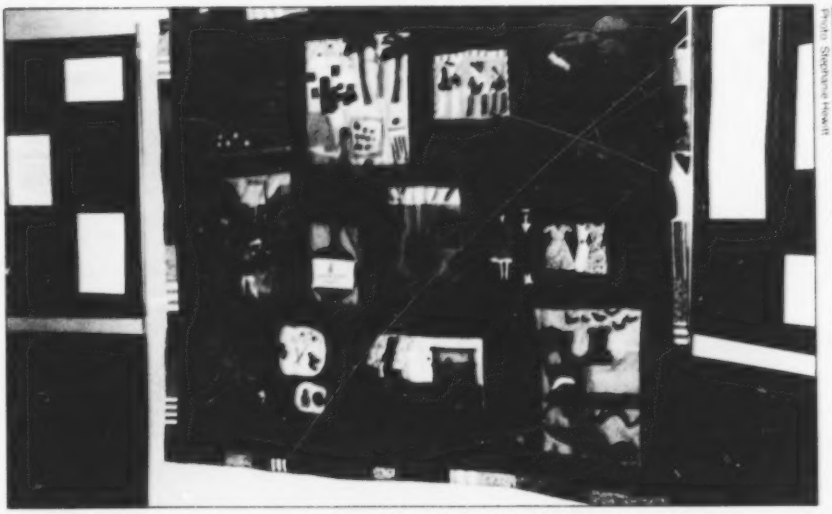

Photo: Stephanie Howell

The wall hanging produced by Leeds Basic Education and Yorkshire Art Circus

Anita McGreal, adult basic education worker in Leeds, describes an original, positive and enjoyable project, which developed from joint work by Leeds Basic Education Unit and the Yorkshire Art Circus.

Introduction

In March 1987 the Yorkshire Art Circus Ltd worked with 26 students at the Leeds Basic Education Unit to produce a book: 'Leeds and Us'. This was a short project to stimulate writing and illustrations very quickly.

As a follow-up to this the Yorkshire Art Circus suggested a longer project, to continue the writing work and develop new skills in the production of a community wall hanging.

Planning the wallhanging

The aims of the project were:

i. *to produce a wall hanging using stories of community life as the subject matter;*

ii. *to use a positive skill to produce work rather than using the deficiency area of lack of literacy ability.*

Work began by telling stories, writing them and collecting fabrics and materials as a base for the wallhanging. An Amstrad worker came to the Basic Education Centre to type up the material.

After the Yorkshire Art Circus had demonstrated the use of materials and templates to spark off ideas on the use of different fabrics and shapes, the students began work on their designs.

Creating . . .

During the process of making their section of the wallhanging the students exchanged experiences of life without basic literacy or numeracy skills. For many there was an atmosphere of relief at actually using a positive skill area to produce something of interest to their local communities.

A group plan of the final wallhanging was decided, and individual pieces were assembled on the backcloth. At this point some changes were made to the original design.

Members of the Yorkshire Art Circus sewed the individual sections together and mounted the hanging, with a wooden pole across the top, like a banner.

The Basic Education Team typed, enlarged and mounted the students' work for the purpose of display.

The party.

And Celebrating

On Thursday, 28th January 1988, the wallhanging was launched with a student party at the Basic Education Centre. A buffet lunch was provided, and the invitation was open to all Basic Education students and tutors.

Stimulated by students from Pecket Well College, students began reading their own works, which provided a fitting ending to a very successful project.

REVIEWS

"Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers"

by Caroline Adams

Published by Thap Books

ISBN 0 906698 14 16

Price: £4.95

In this captivating book we have vivid life stories of ten Sylhetti men, born early this century, all ex-seamen who served on British Merchant Navy ships in peace and in war and settled in Britain. The stories are anecdotal and of immense human interest. They are stories of high adventure, extreme hardship, triumphs and failures, unyielding persistence, courage and romance.

We also get a graphic picture of their homeland, the reasons for young men leaving that land and the irresistible fascination that brings them to London — the first city of the Empire. It also touches on the issue of racism. "A Haji's Story" is all the more poignant becaush Bangladeshis are the worst victims of racism in Britain today.

The book is compiled and edited with great sensitivity by a friend of the community. It is an extremely moving and interesting read and has enormous historical and educational value. It will provide a platform for discussions and debates, a background to the Bangladeshi communities living in Britain and an understanding of why they are here for tutors and students alike.

I have introduced my E.S.L. students to "A Haji Story". It generated a very lively interaction and students willingly shared personal experiences with each other. However, some Bangladeshi and Hindi explanations were required. The book deserves to be translated in Asian languages to reach a much wider audience. I recommend this book to all tutors.

Uma Phalke
E.S.L. Tutor
Swindon College
Wiltshire Education Authority

The Pocket Guide to English Words

by Terry Freedman and Isebail MacLeod

Published by Richard Drew Publishing, Glasgow

ISBN 0 86267 192 2

Price: £2.95

This book, according to the authors and the cover blurb, deals with common errors of grammar, meaning, and spelling, as well as acting as a dictionary particularly of modern coinages, and a guide to pronunciation. It also deals in detail with certain aspects of written English such as how to write curriculum vitae, postcards, and the minutes of a meeting.

It is a small paperback that fits neatly into the pocket, has only 220 pages, and all entries are in alphabetical order. If you look up 'NATO' for instance, you find a four word explanation, whereas if you look up 'letter' you find twenty pages of examples of business, personal, and other letters.

The 'Pocket Guide' seems to me a useful companion for advanced adult basic education students, such as those considering taking the A.E.B. Basic English exam, and those brushing up for skills or pre college courses. It is printed in large clear type, has only about seven entries (plus explanations) per page, and most importantly gives definitions and explanations in clear simple English that many basic education students could both read and understand.

Colleagues made the following points about it. It is user friendly, welcoming language being different to the stuffiness of a dictionary. It is useful, because it can be picked up at any time by a student and dipped into. It gives handy spelling rules (able/ible) for students who worry about rules, it gives models of writing (letters), and it could be used to start a discussion with students about, say, politics, economics, or other aspects of society.

Its faults are obvious. Given the vast range of written English topics it attempts to tackle in so short a space, it is inevitably a mish mash. 'It is whimsical', and 'there's no rhyme or reason for what's included and what's not', were typical reactions. Knowing for instance how to address the Duke of Edinburgh when one meets him, or the meaning of the obscure literary 'immanent', may not be very valuable.

It is not a dictionary, since there are less than 2,000 entries, and should not be confused with one. Its chief strengths in my opinion are the number of commonly confused spellings (practice/practise) and definitions (proceed/precede) it lists, and the fact that the entries are life and social skills based, and are up to date. There is much information on computers, finance, politics, the world of work, and office terminology, and all in the simplest language. It is a handy, all purpose resource to have on the table.

Pat O'Connor
ABE Tutor Organiser
Derbyshire Education Authority

The Foot Family Readers

by Enfield English as a Second Language Unit

Published by Enfield College, 31 Derby Road, Enfield, Middlesex EN3 4AJ

Price: £1.20 complete set

The *"Foot Family"* set of basic level readers consists of six booklets, each introducing a different member of the family who comprise parents and three children. The intention of the authors was to produce suitable reading material for very slow starters, probably with little or no literacy in their first languages. The reading material deliberately does not progress quickly so as to give these students a sense of achievement as they are able to move from book to book through the series. The language is confined to simple present and past tenses. The content is based around names, the home, clothing, time and dates, and is accompanied by line drawings. There are one or two short sentences on each page. The authors envisage that the material could also form the basis of related oral work, or simple written work.

The language is suitable for the basic level reader, although it may be argued that it is too early to introduce the apostrophe "s" meaning "is" or "has" with consequent possible confusion for the learner. Similarly, a family name other than "Foot" — a part of the

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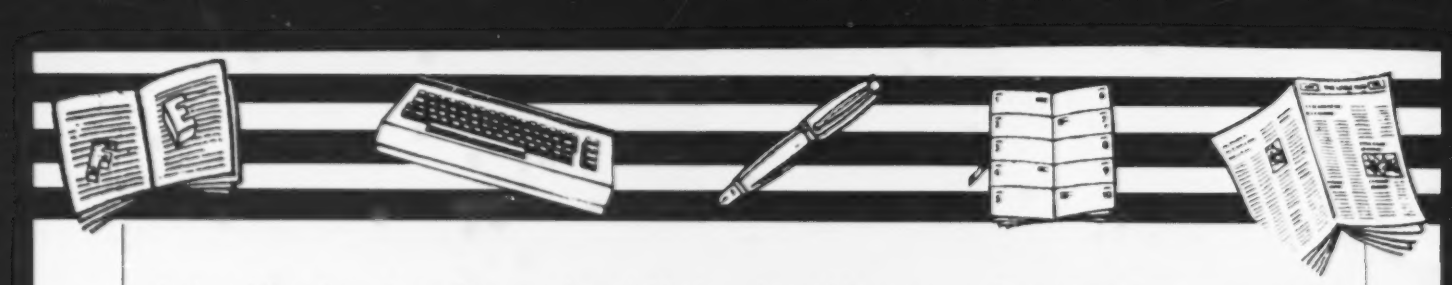

body could have been chosen. The illustrations are clear, simple line drawings, which generally, but not always, are appropriate to support the meaning conveyed by the reading material.

What is most striking about the series is that, although it is intended for learners who are speakers of other languages, there is no clue to this in the illustrations or text. The central family is white, middle-class and stereotyped in their roles, and there is no hint in the language content or in visual clues that the family lives in multi-cultural Britain. There is nothing to show that these books were intended to interest adult speakers of other languages, nor to link with or value their cultural experience, or way of life.

Free translations available on request in Turkish, Greek, Hindi, Punjabi, Gujurati, Bengali.

John Reeves
Co-Ordinator for ESL Courses, Derby CFE
Derbyshire Education Authority

The Disappearing Horse and other plays

by Cambridge House Literacy Scheme Students

Published by Cambridge House Literacy Scheme, 131 Camberwell Road, London SE5

ISBN: 0 9508988 3 X

Price: £1.00 plus 50p postage and packing.

This sixteen page A4-sized booklet contains three short plays:- *The Disappearing Horse*, *The Hotel Mystery Man* and *Back In Time*, each written by a small group of 5 or 6 students and each with a cast of 7 or 8 characters plus a storyteller.

"The Disappearing Horse" consists of a cast of Television personalities such as Blake Carrington, Rod Stewart and Sue Ellen Ewing. The story revolves around the stealing of a race horse and the hiring of two TV detectives to solve the mystery. The play is simply written, the scenes are short and the vocabulary is straightforward. The plot is not very complex and the characters are lightly drawn. Nevertheless, students should find it interesting to read and enact — and the dialogue is easy enough to memorise if groups want to perform rather than read the play.

"The Hotel Mystery Man" is the longest of the three plays and the most interesting. It is based on a true-to-life experience of one of the authors and concerns the theft of a camera by a mysterious stranger in a top London hotel. The "who-done-it" is solved by two of the hotel's chambermaids who are convincingly drawn and provide an element of humour. The play is interesting and amusing and should make entertaining reading and acting for any group of literacy students. The vocabulary is not too difficult and the length of the speeches is varied — but manageable.

"Back In Time", the shortest of the three plays, is a story about travel in space and time. It is lightly drawn and rather confusing, with complicated changes of scenery and characters with whom present-day students might not be familiar. (Groups of students who read and recorded all three playlets found "Back In Time" to be the least interesting and the least entertaining.)

Irene Brunskill
Adult Literacy Tutor
Bolton Education Authority

Reminiscences of a Manchester Woman

by Gladys Alsop

Published by Janice Owen, 6 Albert Road, Eaglescliffe, Stockton-on-Tees

Price: £8.95

This book is a wonderful collection of memoirs written by a seventy-nine year-old woman, who, having written little other than notes to the milkman since leaving school, enrolled at adult education classes and discovered she could both write and paint. The glossy cover is a photograph of one of her paintings of a local park in the snow.

Within, and interspersed with family photographs, are 45 personal reflections of a life, well-lived and enjoyed, despite many hardships. Turning the pages, the reader soon begins to feel an empathy with Gladys. She is everyone's Granny, with a knack of making the ordinary seem special. People are the core around which she has woven her stories. They may be found in the weekly visit of the Crab-man, the Saturday market or the Park. People are the source of her inspiration and she has captured them in her oral storytelling tradition, and preserved them in print for all to enjoy.

Reminiscence therapy amongst the elderly brings enormous benefits; so too for A.B.E. students, for whom reasons to write are often hard to find. Whilst not written specifically for them, this book is inspirational — proof that there is worth in what they write, whatever their age and experience; and that a wide audience can find even the most common-place events interesting.

Individual stories can be used both for reading skills practice as well as stimuli for discussion and writing within groups, since each piece is short and completely self-standing. Their proven appeal is nostalgic and immediate, for everyone has personal experiences, memories and opinions which they are prepared to share. Seeing the family photographs used as an aid to writing encourages others to have a go.

This book is a celebration of the life of one ordinary woman. It is also a remarkable achievement — and if she can do it, then so can we!

Sue Palmer
ABE Co-ordinator
Devon Education Authority

New Nelson Handwriting Books 1-4, Plus Teacher's Handbook

by Peter Smith and A. Inglis

Published by Nelson

ISBN 0 17 424427-4 Teacher's Handbook
ISBN 0 17 424423-1 Book 1
ISBN 0 17 424424-X Book 2
ISBN 0 17 424425-8 Book 3
ISBN 0 17 424426-6 Book 4

Price: £5.10 Teacher's Book
£1.30 Books 1-4

These four clearly and attractively laid out books, together with a comprehensive Teachers' manual, provide a course in handwriting from the introduction of a joined style to the development of an individual style. The books are aimed at 7-11 year olds, with practice at each stage in joining, together with exercises to promote fluency and speed. We used these books in the context of a handwriting course for adults, having found that this was the only appropriate material available.

Whilst the books are excellent for their designed audience, there were obviously shortcomings when applied to adults. Clearly, criticism on these

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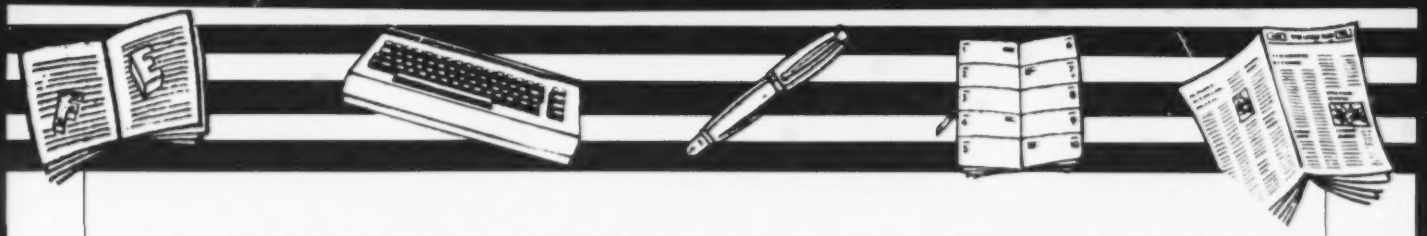

grounds is unfair but the books proved sufficiently useful that with some adaptation, we feel that they could provide an excellent handwriting scheme for adults. In particular prose and poetry examples were lively, but simple, and could be expanded for adult use.

Writing patterns taken from each stage were especially valuable as were the joining exercises.

Most adults who have difficulties with their handwriting have developed a personal style which is often incompatible with the models shown the scheme. In fact some students found the Nelson style too child-like to be of use. If this deficiency could be overcome, together with some modifications, we feel that these books would provide mature students with a valuable programme to improve and develop their handwriting.

Leslie Ilott
ABE Tutor, Stow Hill CEC
Gwent Education Authority

At the End of a Bargepole

by Students of Beauchamp Lodge Literacy Scheme

Published by Beauchamp Lodge

ISBN 0 947624 015

Price: £1.75

It wasn't just that I'd nearly made it by bike along canal towpaths from Bath to Paddington that made me shout with joy one Friday morning last August. What seemed to set the seal on this unexpectedly successful holiday expedition was that I'd just ridden past 'Erica', the Beauchamp Lodge narrow boat. Why this fleeting and tenuous convergence of my working and holiday lives should have so excited me I really don't know, but it seems somehow to have led to my writing this review!

"At the End of a Bargepole" is written by students and tutors of the Beauchamp Lodge Literacy Scheme and, as the blurb says, "tells of the fun (and the disasters) that can be had on barges, and about the learning that went on at the same time. There's a short history of canals and locks in England; and the true story of one student who was born, brought up and made his living on barges." There are 58 A5 pages and the book — a paperback — is attractively produced with clear large print (some line-breaking), photographs, drawings and sketch maps.

The historical parts of the book, which were researched and written during trips on the boat are extremely interesting to read and would inspire similar investigations and recreation within literacy groups, I'm sure. The more personal writings about 'The Weekend Away' range from poetic 'Images' to a catalogue of disasters that led the writer to advise his fellow crew-members, "Carry on Cruising. I'm going to get the Euston train." There is a long autobiographical section by Kenny Dakin which is perhaps the best part of the book — vivid, direct writing, retelling his life's experiences on the canals.

There's something in this book for everyone. I'm sure that literacy groups will enjoy reading it and that it will be a welcome and popular addition to scheme libraries. But, more than that, I hope that literacy schemes will be impressed by the broad view of literacy that this book proclaims. I suppose that when you have a canal flowing past your windows, sooner or later the idea of getting a boat will come up. Or will it? As an example of the value of taking literacy work beyond the classroom walls, this book speaks to all of us. Perhaps that's why I was so excited!

Jenny Brown
County Co-ordinator for A.B.E.
Avon Education Authority

Upon Reflection

by Women's Writing Group, The Drop-In Education & Advice Centre

Published by Printed Resource Unit for Continuing Education, 27 Harrogate Rd, Leeds LS7 3PD

Price: £1.60

This is a selection of writings by a group of women who came together initially after International Women's Day in March 1986. They found that besides educational needs, they had other ideas in common. From their discussions and weekly meetings came this book of writings. These are divided into 5 sections: Life is for Learning, Age and Experience, State of the World, Feelings, Short Stories. The pieces vary in reading difficulty so some can be selected to use with beginning readers, whereas more able readers could tackle the whole book. I think it would prove very useful for encouraging students to "put pen to paper." and to stimulate discussion. Some of the pieces showed the writers have great potential. I hope they get the funding they are seeking to continue writing!

Muriel Aplin
Adult Basic Education Tutor/Organiser
Swindon College
Wiltshire Education Authority

Maths at Work

by Gareth Lewis

Published by Collins Educational

ISBN 0 00 32203 - X

Price: £2.00

This useful book is 'designed to help students develop the Maths skills they will need at work and in everyday adult life'. The familiar structure of illustrated worked examples, exercises with answers at the back generally achieves this aim though a lot of teacher help would be needed with my ABE/ESL students and I don't have a volunteer at the moment.

Unit 1 — Estimation/Approximation — Answers to estimates of length / distance should show a 10%-20% margin of error. We don't expect 100% accuracy in estimating nor should we in marking standard maths exercises √. Could be used to show tolerance of so called mistakes.

Unit 2 — Using a Calculator — Even I could follow the instructions about how to use and understand those 'dreadful' calculator symbols m+mr, m−, mc

Unit 3 — Computers at Work A four page introduction to the subject — useful also to ABE *tutors!*

Unit 4 — Lists/Tables; Unit 5 — Money; Unit 6 — Statistics and **Unit 7 — Graphic Mathematics** are similarly structure with a lot of varied exercises/worksheets. Unit content is useful as stimulus material for individual assignment work, project work, as well as a work-book for the more advanced ABE Student (CSE 4/5)

Unit 4 – Exercise 5.8 is a good practical 'starter' on how to be a window cleaner.

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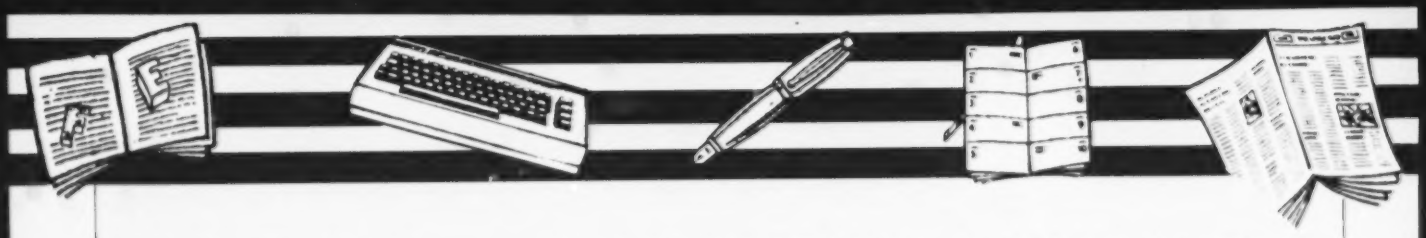

Unit 6 – Exercise 6.2. Pie chart, pictogram, block chart and bar chart type answers are missing for Q's. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9.

Unit 7 – Assumes a lot of Craft, Design, Technology and Technical Drawing knowledge which I found too difficult eg Dress Patterns Exercise 7.6.

The Book shows how important it is to be numerate and I would recommend it because it helps people to obtain this knowledge.

Jim Robinson
ABE Tutor (part-time)
Lincolnshire Education Authority

Microcomputer review

Spelling Rules OK!

by S. Sillars and M. Gardiner

Published by Jonquil Publishing

Price: £14.74 inc VAT

BBC version, Spectrum version also available.

This program provides a simple sort of spelling test on thirteen different confusing patterns. You have to put the correct word into a gapped or highlighted sentence.

If you are familiar with Jonquil worksheets, you will find this program pretty similar. It is designed to complement the worksheet pack of the same name.

The presentation is perfectly adequate; the words are clear on the screen; the graphics are not especially adult, but are much better than the paper version which rely on cartoons. One annoying element is the arcade game sound which cannot be easily turned off.

The choice of spelling difficulties is fine; homophones, ei/ie, plurals, apostrophes, all the patterns people find difficult. Some students enjoy this sort of reinforcement a lot. The gapped sentences use quite simple English and avoid slang; the context is mostly straightforward but with no pretensions to multi-culturalism.

That being said, I feel that this sort of computer program is unimaginative and provides little or nothing which is not there in the book prototype. It will appeal to people who prefer computers to writing their answers, and that is valuable. But one can do so much more with computers than to work through a linear test.

Very confident tutors with time on their hands (are there any?) can change the sentences through the DATA statements in the program. Otherwise students will do the tests once or twice and then discard the program. The best programs around provide material, or the framework for material, which can be used over and over again.

Chris Jackson
ESL Resources Tutor
Ealing Education Authority

Re-review

A Day in the Life

by Sylvia Whitrod and Barbara Moore

Published by The Printed Resource Unit for Continuing Education, 27 Harrogate Road, Leeds LS7 3PD.

Price: £1.30 each (incl. p&p)
£7.90 full set (inc. p&p)

This is a set of very basic readers for adult literacy students. The set of seven small books (each about 32 pages) is divided into days of the week — one book for each day. The stories centre around the everyday happenings in the life of a young couple, Ann and Bob. There are four elements to each page of the story, so they work on four different levels. First is an analogue clock-face, and beneath it the time in digital form. At the bottom of the page is a simple sentence in clear bold print describing what is happening. On the page opposite is an illustration of the scene providing context clues, with a speech bubble from one of the characters. This vocabulary is not quite so limited as the descriptive sentences, and is a very good way of showing the difference between a reported incident and direct speech. I particularly liked the helpful word list at the back of each book, which can be used by the tutor to develop related work.

My only criticisms would be that at some time between Tuesday and Wednesday the illustrator changed. I found this a bit disconcerting, but I read all the books at one sitting. A slow reader tackling just one book per session would not necessarily find this to be a problem. I was also slightly irritated to find that Ann is a stereotypical housewife. She stays at home doing the washing, ironing, cooking and shopping. Once a week she goes with a friend to bingo. Bob goes to work, mows the lawn and lends a manly hand with the washing up. I appreciate that women readers of this series may not be emancipated feminists but a bit more role-blurring would have been nice.

Margaret Taylor
Albsu Project Worker
Northamptonshire Education Authority

The ALBSU Newsletter is published four times a year, in November, February, May and July. Copies are available, free, to organisations and individuals. We aim to publish articles of interest to those teaching in adult literacy, second language and basic skills, those who are responsible for funding and organising the provision, and those who are generally interested in these important areas of work.

If you have ideas on topics which you would like to see covered, please contact the Editor, at ALBSU. Reviews of relevant publications are written for the newsletter by practitioners, and we are interested to receive publications which could be useful in basic education.

Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit, Kingsbourne House, 229/231 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DA. Tel: 01-405 4017.

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No 31

ALBSU

Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit

NEWSLETTER

Photo: Peter Ward

Parents and Children Enjoy Reading (see Insert).

ASSESSING THE PROGRESS OF LEARNERS
PAGE 2

PAGE 4

STEAMY SUMMER IN THE BIG APPLE!
PAGE 6

PAGE 10

PARENTS AND CHILDREN ENJOY READING
INSERT

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ASSESSING THE PROGRESS OF LEARNERS

Assessment – sometimes narrowly looked upon as testing – is a major concern of almost everyone involved in adult literacy and basic skills work. Moreover, arguments about assessment often polarise between those who advocate so called objective tests (and a whole industry has grown up out of producing and marketing such tests) and those who advocate very informal assessment or no assessment at all.

ALBSU believes that there is a need for a 'middle way'. Certainly most practitioners reject the use of standardised tests usually standardised on and intended for use with children. Few like the pseudo scientific approach typical of most tests, find applying them threatening and recognise that the production of a reading quotient or more commonly a reading age means little to the average adult. Most tests are notoriously inaccurate and involve tasks that have little connection with the reading and writing tasks most adults perform or wish to perform.

Fortunately most practitioners involved at the beginning of the literacy campaign rejected this approach at the outset even when potential students came expecting to be tested much as they were at school. Thus, rather than spending precious time inventing new tests and training tutors to use them, time was spent exploring alternatives which would be more in tune with the philosophy of literacy work with adults. It was recognised that any easy, neat solution to assessment was not likely and that if one did appear it was best to treat it with suspicion.

HOW'S IT GOING?

The major seminal handbook on assessment had the subtitle "An alternative to testing students in adult literacy" and it is not surprising that this has been one of the major influences in the development of assessment techniques. "How's It Going?" by Martin Good and John Holmes was published by ALBSU's predecessor, the Adult Literacy Unit in 1979 and the continued demand for copies indicates how influential it has been. In many respects the assessment charts were less important than the basic philosophical approach outlined by Good and Holmes. Their approach to failure, for instance, seemed to go against the received wisdom that students would lose motivation unless every session was relatively successful.

"How's It Going?" also saw students as partners in assessment rather than victims of education professionals' concern with 'precise' measurement. Long gone were the days when literacy students were plucked out of classes to be tested and often returned in ignorance as to what the tests had indicated or why.

Good and Holmes also recognised that assessment had to be an intrinsic part of teaching and learning rather than external to it and that it often formed the 'intelligence' necessary for good lesson planning. In direct contrast to much traditional testing, they also recognised that assessment in adult literacy needed to be concerned with strengths – what a student could do – rather than with weaknesses – what a student couldn't do – and that more attention should be given to how good readers and writers operated rather than basing everything on the experience of the school remedial department.

Much of this has become the basis of basic education work and has informed practice and development over the last decade and more. Perhaps it is, for some, self-evident and really does not need repeating. However, with an increased profile for basic skills work and a whole new strand developing as part of Employment Training, we need to be able to set out the philosophy that has guided basic education since its inception.

"Some people feel that students need not think about their real progress. They could not bear the possibility of failure, or of doing less well than they hoped to. We disagree. Most students are interested in reality; understanding how their learning is getting on is part of it. At the same time as learning to read and write they are learning how they learn. And some failure is necessary to all learning. You cannot learn without it".

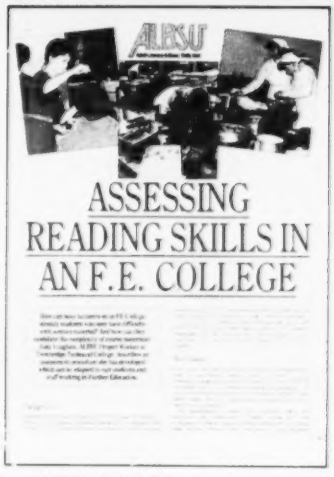
A VARIETY OF PRACTICE

The weakness of much current practice has, however, been the variety of practice and the difficulty in quantifying progress in any understandable terms. Thus, often we fell back on the very general 'good progress is being made' or the very specific 'she's just gone to polytechnic' neither of which are much use. Moreover, few students are satisfied by the general or see themselves and their learning in the traditional hierarchical sense of achievement which besets so much of post school education. Quantification has usually had to rely on external assessment such as that carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research in 1978-79 or on strictly subjective reports by basic education schemes and a feeling that learning is taking place and that good is being done. Although neither approach is particularly satisfactory, this did not (and does not) matter quite so much when basic education is perceived as a marginal activity less important and less valuable than most continuing education provision. The more it is recognised as integral foundation learning for many adults as well as an important corrective in a fundamentally elitist and unfair education system, the more necessary it is to develop well founded and quantifiable assessment procedures.

All of this needs to be set against the 'testing for the sake of it' approach which besets much basic education work in, for example, the United States. Certainly many of the practitioners who visited New York as part of the ALBSU/Lehman College, New York Exchange were horrified by the competency based testing, its seemingly frequent use and the effect it has had on the curriculum. Moreover, in some states results of tests seem to be the only criteria used for deciding the funding level of basic education programs and the salary levels of teachers. What was reassuring, however, was the dislike of such tests by US practitioners, the recognition that they did not test anything of relevance and the search for a new way. The experience of the United States is, perhaps, an object lesson of what we need to avoid in the U.K.

ASSESSMENT FOR WHAT?

In developing assessment procedures, we need to separate initial assessment, diagnostic assessment and the assessment of progress. Most old fashioned tests are primarily initial assessment tests although they are of doubtful validity even for that purpose. The Unit believes that knowing what a potential student can or cannot do can be relatively easily ascertained during an initial interview by discussion with the student, by asking and if appropriate by suggesting some realistic reading and writing tasks. Moreover, the process of



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teaching and learning will fill in any gaps that are not apparent at the first meeting. In basic education, where a longer term relationship is assumed, initial assessment is not such a great problem although in vocationally related provision or in institutions such as prisons, a longer term relationship cannot be assumed. The number of enquiries we have had about Judy Vaughan's approach to initial assessment in the Insert accompanying Newsletter No. 29 indicates that there is certainly a demand for some help with initial assessment from colleges of further education and Employment Training schemes. (A pack of materials is to be published shortly).

Diagnostic assessment is primarily concerned with looking at what a student can and cannot do well and usually takes place at some point after an initial interview. Sometimes a battery of different tests are used although more often practitioners design their own material along with their own system for recording information gained.

Assessment of progress is primarily concerned with movement or lack of it over a period of tuition. Although it can be based on a pre-determined set of competencies or tasks, which every student is expected to be able to do, this is not an approach supported by the Unit. We also reject the notion of normative assessment where each student's progress is compared with the progress made by other students. Most basic education students have already been labelled as failures in a competitive education system and to think that greater competition will motivate them is an illusion. What is needed is a systematic method of assessing the progress made by any student over a period of time measured in terms of their aims for learning. Moreover, we need to be able to aggregate the progress made by individual students to indicate, in quantifiable and understandable terms, the general level of success in learning that literacy and basic education schemes are having.

ASSESSMENT OF WHAT?

Although it may seem self-evident, the question "Assessment of What?" is rather more complex than it might seem at first sight. Assessment can be concerned with the fairly specific skills of reading, writing and basic numeracy or with a whole range of social and coping skills. The danger, of course, in attempting to assess these wider social and coping skills is, perhaps, that it assumes that literacy and numeracy students are in general socially inadequate and fail to cope with the everyday tasks that most adults take for granted. This 'deficit model' sees students as incapable of shopping or parenting or job seeking rather than seeing them as people who have inadequate mastery of communication skills for their needs, whether these are purely functional or are more aesthetic. Who, for instance, needed job seeking skills in the days of full employment?

A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

Clearly students and tutors need to be centrally concerned with assessing progress within a framework determined by the basic education scheme concerned. Tutors need to be clear what progress a student is making and individual students have a clear right to obtain information concerning progress as part of tuition. Moreover, any basic education scheme needs feedback if tuition, or training is to be adjusted or modified to improve the effectiveness of the learning opportunity for individual students. The need for feedback on progress, perhaps in a less detailed sense, is also the right of funders be they elected members, central government or the tax payer. Public funding involves public accountability and demands for greater funding without evidence of current effectiveness are likely to fall on increasingly deaf ears.

Assessment of progress in literacy – a seemingly simple yet in reality complex concept – is never likely to be uncontroversial or simple, and falling back on inappropriate childish tests is no more an answer than denying that assessment is necessary at all. Moreover, if assessment of progress in literacy is complex, numeracy presents even more challenges particularly as most existing tests are used to screen people out of jobs and training opportunities rather than to assess their strengths or progress.

Finding an acceptable framework for the assessment of progress will not, of course, be easy although ALBSU is hopeful that its research project at Nottingham University will produce a model for the immediate future. Yet find the right approach we must. Rejecting sterile, inappropriate testing is perfectly defensible; rejecting any assessment is not.

GETTING STUDENTS TO PREDICT

Analysing how we read, fluently, has important lessons for how we teach reading. In this article Joe Martin, Lecturer in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Wirral Metropolitan College, looks at the role of prediction and suggests ways of developing this skill with students.

How do we read?

One of the surprising things about reading is that most fluent readers are very vague about how they manage to read so quickly and easily. This is probably just as well. The fluent reader is the reader to whom the task has become second nature and, if you're engaged in a task that is second nature, to think about *how* you do it will adversely affect – perhaps even ruin – the *way* you do it: as the centipede found out when she began to worry about the synchronisation of her feet. And of course there is little need for the average practised reader ever to be concerned with what are called the 'mechanics' of reading – any more than it is necessary for a practised swimmer to know all about anatomy.

When we attempt to teach someone else to read, though, the situation changes. To use the same comparison as above, the good swimming instructor will know quite a bit about anatomy. The knowledge will help in the essential business of spotting where the pupil is going wrong, and – more importantly – where that pupil is going right. Unfortunately, the analogy between reading and swimming doesn't quite fit perfectly: for, while there is unanimous agreement about the theory of human anatomy, there is no such agreement on the theory of reading. And – bad news for literacy teachers and their students – it is this lack of agreement about the *theory* which is responsible for the wide variety of *practice* in the teaching of reading. We thus have heated and even bitter arguments constantly raging between, for instance, the advocates of phonics and the proponents of 'look-and-say'. The usual way of attempting to guide the novice literacy tutor through the maze of controversy is to recommend 'a little of everything'. Give the student a mixture of phonic drill, flash-cards, cloze exercises, reading aloud, social sight vocabulary and so on. The trouble with this approach is that the balance of ingredients mixed in will vary according to the preferences of the tutors concerned. The result may, or may not be, the appropriate mix for the student.

What is Prediction?

The rest of what follows in this article is frankly controversial. I will be advocating teaching methods which depend on the roles of prediction and prior knowledge in reading. Very few educators argue that these have no part at all to play in reading. But very few seem ready to acknowledge that they are the most important factors – particularly in *fluent* reading. However, before going on, it would be best to explain what is meant here by 'prediction' and 'prior knowledge'.

Try the following Cloze exercise.–

> How do you fancy your.....s in life's survival stakes? Think you can last the dist..... for your three score years and .....? By taking just a few c.....-sense precautions, you can increase your .....s of living to a grand old .....

The reason why you probably found this exercise childishly easy is because you have prior knowledge of 'what comes next'. Similarly, because you have prior knowledge of which vowels inevitably fit into the gaps, you will have little trouble with.–

> Th... m...st fl...nt r...ders m...y c...me acr...ss w...rds wh...ch g...ve th...m s...me d...ff...c...ulty.

It is this 'educated guessing' which we call 'prediction in reading'. And it is prior knowledge – not merely knowledge of where vowels fit in, or how to complete idioms such as 'fancy your .....s', but the whole world of general knowledge, too which enables fluent readers to do what they do. (Consider this cloze: "Mar.....n Monr..... was perfectly aware that she was a s..... symb..... for hordes of cin..... f...ns." You could hardly cloze the gaps here without possessing considerable *general* knowledge – general knowledge having little to do with the English writing system.

The vital point is that fluent reading (where 'fluent reading' = 'reading quickly and easily') does not involve reading every word, and, even where a word is actually read, most certainly does not involve reading or even seeing every letter. You can easily convince yourself of this by reading aloud a page of a novel and then reading the next page silently, timing yourself in both cases. You will find that no matter how quickly you read aloud, your silent reading far outstrips your oral effort. And the speed of your silent reading can only be explained by the fact that you don't read every word, but, to a great extent, skip through the text by actually predicting 'what comes next'.

(Anyone interested in a more detailed explanation of prior knowledge and prediction will find a full treatment in *Comprehension and Learning*, Frank Smith; Holt, Rhinehart and Winston; 1975.)

Convince her she can already read . . .

By now, you are probably impatiently muttering, "What has all this to do with teaching my student to read?" The answer is that we have to do is to convince the student that she can read already.

Most of us are familiar with the student who comes along to the class for the first

time and says she can't read anything at all. This is almost certainly not true. It is nearly impossible to grow up in any Western society without being able to recognise at least two or three dozen words on sight. It's a good bet that the average 'illiterate' adult will be able to pick out on sight: her own name; the names of her immediate family; most of the words in her home address; 'public' words like, LADIES, GENTLEMEN, BOOTS, WOOLWORTHS, MARKS & SPENCERS, JOB CENTRE; and words which have personal relevance to her life and interests, such as 'baby', 'mother', 'father', 'television'. In addition, the student will know the commonest words like 'a', 'the', 'and', 'or', 'I', 'you', as well as fragments from infancy such as 'cat', 'mat', etc.

Why does such a student believe that she "can't read at all"? She is not lying out of some sort of perverse pride. In fact, her self-doubt arises from the fact that she is not at all clear about what reading actually is. Her experience of others reading comes from various sources: classroom sessions in which her schoolmates converted into spoken sentences the puzzling marks on the pages of books; people silently absorbed in magazines, newspapers, paperbacks. The fact that she can 'look-and-say' WOOLWORTHS does not seem to her to have very much to do with those other activities.

A controversial point here is that many teachers (both of the practical classroom variety and the educational theoretical sort) would tend to agree with the student. Because it is likely that she could not 'sound out' many of the words in her limited reading vocabulary, could not perhaps even name all the letters which make them up, and almost certainly could not, unaided, spell them, her recognitions of the words might well be dismissed as not 'really' reading at all. This seems to me to be a mistake. After all, if someone were to whistle a short melody in tune, we would not say that this wasn't whistling at all, on the grounds that the whistler could not name the notes he was whistling and might not, say, be able to whistle the middle five notes of the tune on request. If he could only whistle that particular tune, we might accurately say that he was not a very advanced whistler. Briefly, he can 'whistle a bit'. And similarly, in commonsense terms, our 'totally illiterate' student can 'read a bit'.

If we do not admit this at the outset, the implications for our teaching and, it follows, our student's learning, are disastrous. The likely outcome is that we start her off afresh – perhaps with a 'thorough grounding in phonics'. As a result we will disvalue the limited skills she already possesses (and we must not forget that, few though those skills are, they have been acquired over a long period of time and probably with painful labour). We will also reinforce her notion that reading is a mysterious activity which bears little or no relation to anything she is yet capable of accomplishing.

Encouraging Guesses

What we must do, then, is to convince the student of this truth – that she *can* read a little. Reading aloud is the best, perhaps the only, way of setting about this. As mentioned above, most students are reasonably familiar with their own addresses, so this seems as good a beginning as any. But to familiarize your student with the idea of prediction, to encourage the feeling that "it's all right to guess", it's a good plan to write or type her address in the form of a Cloze exercise, e.g.–

9 Paternoster..... Newtown

Mersey..... M44 E3

and to construct variations on this, such as,

9 Pater..... Avenue

New.....

.....side M44 E3

though you will not, of course, want to carry such exercises to the point of tedium.

The next step is to move on to material which is still familiar and which makes large use of the reading vocabulary the student already possesses (however tiny that vocabulary is). Well known sayings and folk adages and rhymes are useful. However, it is as well to bear in mind that another surprise in store for the novice tutor is the gaps in general and folk knowledge which show up when dealing with ABE students. Oral tradition is not as universal as might be expected. For example, I have myself taught students who were strangers to such items as "Thirty days hath September .....", or "Red sky in the morning ....."

On the other hand, your student will almost certainly be familiar with many jingles, tags, sayings and rhymes which are not in *your* store of prior knowledge. The simple and well-known technique of 'brainstorming' is the obvious way of eliciting this repertoire. Written down and converted into cloze passages, these items will form a valuable source of material for future sessions.

Taking the mystery out of reading

By now you may be quite sceptical of this whole business of prediction and making use of prior knowledge. It may seem to be ignoring or at least obscuring the difference between actual *reading* and *remembering*: but this is the whole point. It is memory (i.e. prior knowledge) that enables the fluent reader to read so effortlessly. What we must do is to make our students aware of the connection between reading and remembering which will take much of the mystery out of reading itself. To point this connection up – think of the child who, having had, say, "The Three Bears" read to her every night for several weeks, one night claims to be able to read it for herself; and goes on to 'prove' it by reciting the story aloud while looking earnestly at the correct pages. Contrary to some parents' belief, the child is not fibbing. This is what she thinks that reading *is*. But the extraordinary thing about this is, that it is this very child who will come soonest and most painlessly to the actual task of reading. Soon, the connection between the marks on the page and her recitation will strike her and she will then begin to decipher as well as to recite parrot-fashion.

Again, we can make a comparison between swimming and reading. Children are often convinced that they can swim when, in fact, they have at least one foot on the bottom of the pool. This illusion never hampers their actual learning to swim. It helps their confidence in their own ability. In later years, few adults can recall just when wading became swimming. But they will mostly agree that the step from one to the other was easily accomplished. Similarly with reading: if our students can be persuaded that what they *can* do – remember – and what they cannot yet do – read – are pretty similar and that the two tasks often, in fact, merge into one, then a vast increase of confidence is generated.

The move on to reading longer and more difficult texts can come much sooner than many tutors might think. Further, within reasonable limits the larger chunks of reading material that are tackled the better. The choice of texts, of course, will depend on the student's concerns and interests. Of course, too, selection of suitable materials is too large a subject to be dealt with in the present article. But a word must be said about reading aloud.

Helping, not correcting

No doubt most tutor-training courses make it clear that corrections while the reading is taking place must be kept to a minimum. However, this point must be re-emphasized. Unless the mistakes that the student makes turn the text into nonsense, it is essential that the tutor does not halt the student. *Help*, of course, is a very different matter and the student will usually leave the tutor in no doubt when it is needed. But the help provided should not consist of lifting the student over the hurdle, so much as in pointing in the right direction to jump. To illustrate this: supposing the text reads,

"The football fans were all dressed up, wearing red rosettes."

and the student sticks on the last word. It is infinitely more productive to ask, "Well, what kind of red things *would* the football fans be wearing?" than to murmur, "rosettes", or even to ask the student to 'sound it out'.

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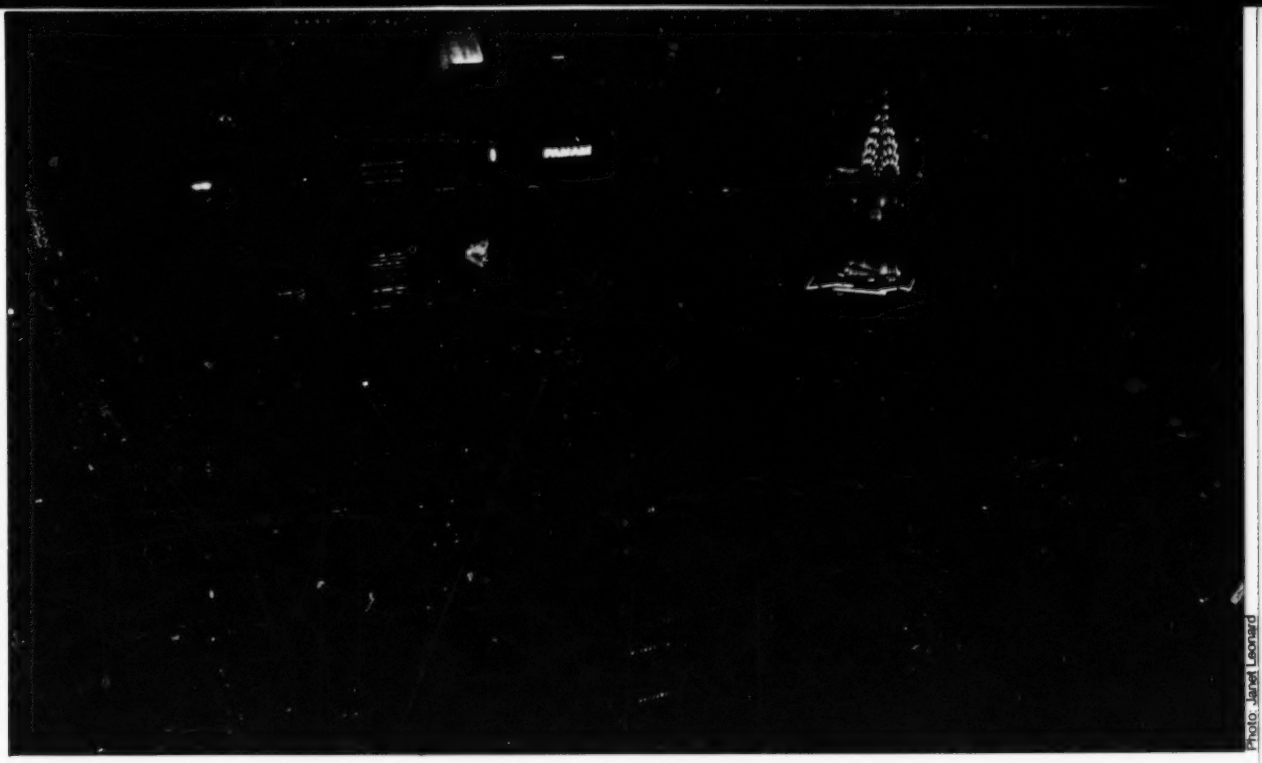

Photo: Janet Leonard

STEAMY SUMMER IN THE BIG APPLE!

From June 15-19 this year forty ABE practitioners from the UK worked, in New York, with seventy five US practitioners at a conference which marked the beginning of a year long UK US initiative. Sponsorship, in particular from Reed International and the Post Office, was successfully raised to pay for most of the costs, and participants were also sponsored by their LEA or employer. The people who went were all experienced practitioners, who represented different geographical areas and who could contribute expertise on innovative areas of work. They were also in a position to disseminate information to the field, and to take part in collaborative work over the next year. In this article Lesley Wilkinson, ABE Co-ordinator Clwyd, gives her personal impressions of the Conference, and outlines the work which began there.

"New York, New York – so good they named it twice" (as the song goes), but you certainly didn't need to say it twice to the forty ABE practitioners and students from England, Wales and Northern Ireland who set off from Heathrow one overcast day in June this year, bound for John F. Kennedy Airport. They were the participants of a four day conference, 'As We Teach It' – a British American exchange on Adult Literacy, at the City University of New York in the Bronx.

This conference was to be the first activity of the UK/US Adult Literacy Initiative, which is a project of collaboration between the Institute of Literacy Studies (ILS) in New York and the ALBSU in the U.K., designed to enable A.B.E. practitioners to share information, disseminate knowledge, examine specific issues related to literacy work and develop and implement new projects as a result.

The morning after arrival saw us in groups of two and threes, maps in hand, setting off into the steamy heat of New York to visit local programs (ABE groups to you and me). Two visits, morning and evening, to ABE groups in New York had been slotted into the hectic conference timetable. Most of us, albeit jet-lagged and unaccustomed to the humid heat, braved the Subway (the New York underground system) and the vast, busy, dusty streets to find our way to classes run by the Board of Education, the Consortium for Worker Education, the New York Public Library Centres for Reading and Writing, the Mothers' Reading Program and others. The visit proved fascinating – this was Adult Basic Education in the flesh!

We were welcomed by students and tutors eager to show us their work and hear about similar classes for adults in the U.K. and for me the visits confirmed the fact that students and tutors in America have to work in a variety of locations and conditions, just like us. Some groups worked in comfortable and well equipped sites, but others, like the one I visited, had few material resources but plenty of enthusiasm.

COMMISSIONS

The main focus of the conference, however, was on a series of Commissions or Workshops on seven specific topics pre-selected by the planning teams from

both countries as a result of their discussions and negotiations. They were: Assessment and Evaluation; Ethnic and Language Minority Literacy; Learner Centred Education; Literacy for Community Action; Teacher/Tutor Training; Work-related Literacy; Implications of Adult Literacy Education. These Commissions ran throughout the four mornings of the conference.

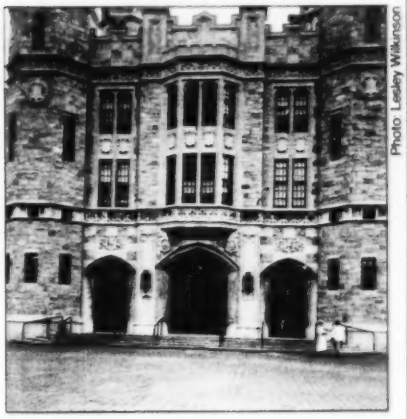

Photo Lesley Wilkinson

Lehman College

Prior to the conference, participants had been asked to select the Commission of their choice – the aim being for participants within each Commission to present aspects of their work to each other, and to address, through discussion, the issues concerning their particular topic at local, national and international level and, as a result, to produce plans for collaborative projects which participants would work on througout the coming year – no mean feat! All this took place at Lehman College – a very impressive, immaculately kept (and well air-conditioned!) building on an equally impressive and immaculately-kept campus, where we were greeted each day, after our 45 minute bumpy bus ride by college bus from our hotels, with a 'coffee and Danish' and my very favourite – blueberry muffins!

I was involved with and co-facilitator of the Learner-Centred Education Commission. There were five other U.K. participants involved and 10 Americans – all of us from places as diverse as the Bronx, Washington, Boston, California, Philadelphia, the Rocky Mountains, Manchester, Cheshire, Clwyd, London, Nottingham and Gwynedd! We quickly discovered there was a language barrier, which was just as quickly overcome, when we realised that the word 'tutor' to the Americans meant a volunteer tutor, that they call their professional tutors/group organisers 'instructors', and that their students receive 'instruction'. The phrase 'negotiated learning' drew puzzled looks from U.S. participants and we were asked: "How is the contract drawn up?" We quickly had to explain that this was not a formal agreement drawn up as a contract on paper, but a mutual, informal and shared co-operation between tutor/instructor and student!

CONTRASTS

The U.K. participants of my Commission were envied by our American colleagues because we had the freedom to practise and develop student-centred learning within the context of our schemes. We have the freedom to put our students first, to involve them in diagnosing and expressing their needs, to allow them to choose their own materials with which to work and to encourage them to think for themselves. Our U.S. colleagues have more constraints upon this freedom – in most of their national literacy programs students are tested and assessed formally, a program of instruction is drawn up and given to instructors and tutors to deliver – with the presence of the requirements of the G.E.D. (General Education Diploma – the High school leaving certificate) ever lurking in the background. Sometimes practitioners in Britain are guilty, as I have been myself, of only paying lip service to the theory of student centred learning, but this experience stressed for me just how important it is to utilise and exploit this freedom to the full, especially at a time when 'testing' is making its way back into our school system.

The afternoons of the conference were taken up by 'methodology sessions', which were presentations of aspects of work delivered by participants from both sides of the Atlantic, followed by questions and discussion. Conference participants signed up for the presentation of their choice. There was a huge variety to choose from: 'Family Literacy', 'Workplace Education', 'Rural Literacy Programs', 'Radio in ABE work: Radio Manchester', 'Literacy in West Belfast', 'Housing Issues for Literacy Development', 'Researching our Mothers' and 'Issues in Student Writing' – to name but a few. Participants had worked hard making their presentations and I was just as interested to hear about Sandra Softley's ALBSU project with Radio Manchester, as I was to hear about volunteer tutor training in Philadelphia. It was all fascinating stuff! Much information was exchanged and informal contacts and promises to send copies of this and that made – all of which continued on the bus back into the centre of New York in the early evening.

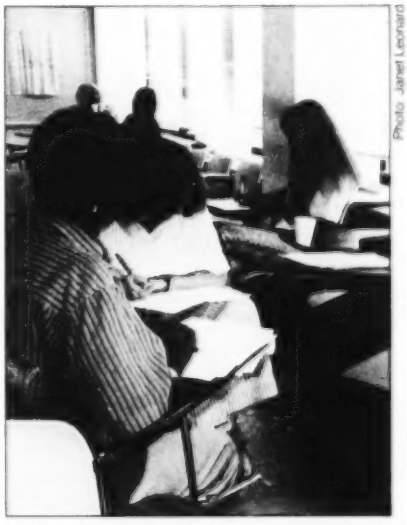

Photo Janet Leonard

The Commission on Training

FUTURE COLLABORATION

On the final day of the conference in the smart lecture theatre in Lehman College, the fruits of all this talking and discussion and sharing of experiences were revealed in the form of the proposed collaborative projects each commission had agreed to undertake over the coming year. The results of this work will be disseminated at a conference in July 1989 when ALBSU will play host to the visiting Americans. The proposed collaborative projects cover a wide spectrum of ABE work ranging from projects like 'A Critical reflection on Assessment', 'Student Control in Curriculum Development', 'Reflecting on the Past and Projections into the Future' to 'A Handbook on Model Training Programs', 'Models for work-related Literacy', 'Literacy in Prisons' and 'Literacy for Deaf Students' and reflect the interests and concerns of all the ABE practitioners involved in the conference. It had been a hectic schedule, but we all thoroughly enjoyed our stay and appreciated the hospitality shown to us by our American colleagues.

Many of us felt that the conference had given a new impetus to our work, had broadened our horizons (literally as well as figuratively!) and at the same time had brought about a realization and an appreciation of the very sound and innovative work that goes on in the U.K., often with limited resources, together with a resolve to change those aspects of our practice which are not quite so good and to exploit all resources to the full.

As at all conferences, the informal conversations at the lunch break and outside the conference rooms cemented the contacts and friendships made and I found the American practitioners intensely curious about the British way of life. Perhaps when they visit us, they may find the answers to some of the questions they asked: "Are the Prince and Princess of Wales really happy together?" "Is AIDS a problem in the U.K.?" "Do the British stop everything for afternoon tea?" "Do British marriages last longer than American ones?" and perhaps I will learn, in turn, more about how to cope with caring for the AIDS sufferer in the ABE class – and how to make those blueberry muffins!

Information

New Readers

Three more titles have been published in the ALBSU New Readers series, available from the Unit.

Routeing Around Wales
by Peter Benyon and John Tait
from NEWMAT

A clear, well-illustrated guide to the sights, history and customs of Wales. 36 pages.

£1.50. Postage: 1 copy 26p, 5 copies 90p

Routeing Around The Heart of England
by Sandra Woodcock with Karen Wildgust and Chris Priestley
by NEWMAT

A short guide to the sights, history and industry of the Heart of England. 24 pages.

£1.00. Postage: 1 copy 32p

Dogs and Roses
by Karen Beggs
from NEWMAT

A modern love story. Illustrated with black and white photographs. 72 pages.

£1.50. Postage: 1 copy 32p

Balid AGM

The British Association for Literacy in Development: Annual Seminar and General Meeting, November 23rd. 3.00pm to 6.00pm Commonwealth Institute, London.

An opportunity to hear about West Germany's Literacy programmes in the developing world from Heri Bert Hinzen, from the Deutsher Volkfhochschul-Verband e.V. Enquiries 0273 671901 or 021 235 2188.

Health and Safety

Skillstrain
YOUTH TRAINING SCHEME

We have received a number of letters making similar points, which have been passed on to those working at Frimhurst.

Help Us Update the Guide to Literacy and Numeracy Materials

It aims to be a comprehensive list of learning materials in this field.

All Training Commission youth and adult training schemes have had a copy of the first edition.

It has been very popular, so we are updating it on behalf of the Training Commission.

We need your help.

If you use any materials for people developing literacy and numeracy skills, please tell us! We need them to be:

- appropriate for using with adults
- easily available

If you would like to tell us about them please give us a ring or write to us at Cambridge Training and Development Ltd, 43 Clifton Road, Cambridge CB1 4FB. Tel: 0223 411464. Ask for Lesley Crichton or mark your envelope 'Literacy and Numeracy update'.

Continuing Education for Adults with Learning Difficulties

A NIACE project, with funding from the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust, will highlight good practice in special needs work, and build an inter-agency network of providers in England and Wales.

The project's aims are:

1. **To establish an interactive network of providers of education for adults with learning difficulties in England and Wales.**
2. **To collect examples of good educational practice with adults who have learning difficulties in the widest variety of settings and at all levels of ability.**
3. **To research good practice in the education of the general community about the needs and potential of people with learning difficulties.**
4. **To disseminate the lessons of good practice in eductional provision for adults with learning difficulties and related community education by the publication of a handbook and its launch at a national conference.**

For further information contact Jeannie Sutcliffe,
The NIACE/Joseph Rowntree Project
c/o S.A.L.P.
Charles Street A.E. Centre
Charles Street
Luton LU2 0EB
Tel: Luton (0582) 38348

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Case Studies for Training Agents and Managers.

ALBSU has worked with the Employment Department; the Training Agency (formerly the Training Commission) to produce a case study guide to Good Practice in Literacy and Numeracy in a vocational setting. Copies available, free, from the Unit. Please send a large stamped addressed envelope.

Simon Engineering, Stockport (Basic Skills on the mezzanine floor)

Working On Series

Three practical guides with detailed advice on assessment, review and delivery of basic skills tuition and extensive examples linked to different occupational areas. They are intended for tutors who are:

- Not specialist in teaching literacy or numeracy
- Are new to the subject
- Want to rethink their approach

The handbooks may be particularly useful to tutors and trainers in:

- Employment Training.
- Basic Education.
- Youth Training Scheme.
- Colleges of FE.
- In the Workplace.

Jointly published by ALBSU with COIC:
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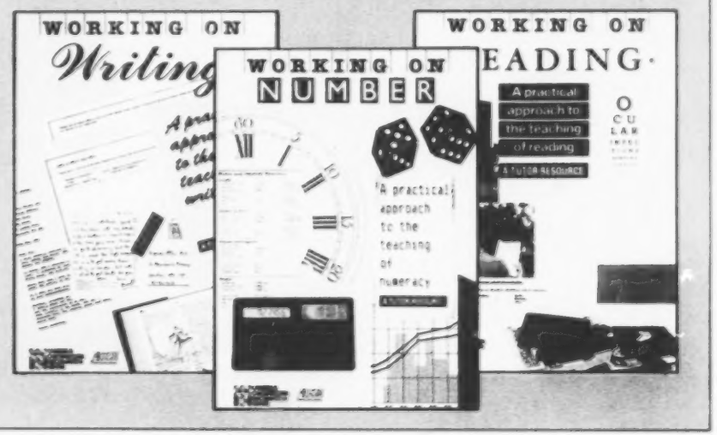
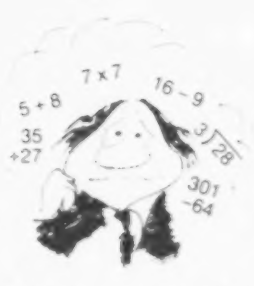


MIND OVER MATHS

Students, and tutors, often panic when it comes to Maths. In this article Joan Matthew, a basic education tutor with responsibility for numeracy, who works for Newcastle upon Tyne Adult Basic Education Service, gives practical advice on how to increase confidence and skills.

Were you tempted to turn the page quickly because the word "Maths" jumped out the from the title? So many people take fright at the thought of doing maths/numeracy/calculations or at helping others to do them. This article is an attempt to put the kind of maths we really need into perspective using illustrations from my own experience and offering practical ways in which students can be helped. It is aimed at the student who is beyond beginner level.

Why does maths cause panic?



When asking around, among students, friends and colleagues, the usual reply to this question is,

"I don't want to look stupid in front of other people."

So what makes us look stupid? The reply comes,

"I might get the wrong answer. I feel I'm being put on the spot. Kids at school can do these things so I must seem thick."

Three points for consideration:
The panic-striken individual feels

1. an accurate answer must be produced
2. the answer must be produced immediately
3. everyone else can do it.

The last point is probably the easiest to dispel through group discussion and support. In a group lesson we invariably find that everyone else cannot do it. That is why so many people come to classes. The first two point to ideals of speed and accuracy, laudable they are but, like all ideals, difficult if not impossible to achieve. All too often, we are left with memories of agonising mental arithmetic tests and spot tests round the classroom and shattered confidence.

"If you weren't saying the tables along with everyone else you got a clip. You stopped thinking then. You couldn't get it right."

"I was talking in class and I was asked to stand up and tell everyone how to do these fractions. My mind went blank. I had done them in my book all right but I couldn't remember how I'd done them. I never remembered after that."

These quotes from students convey the sense of panic they felt which stayed with them as adults.

How can we alleviate the panic?

Students who came to Newcastle Adult Basic Education Service come voluntarily and because they want to learn. There are many other types of provision where maths tuition is given but most tutors are familiar with the fear that maths provokes.

A typical session starts with talk. The tutor's role is to encourage talking and above all to listen. From the outset we try to create an atmosphere where a student feels comfortable enough to talk freely and we can find out where the problems began. A student who is fearful of coping needs help to talk this through before attempting a piece of work. Talking does not stop after the first lesson. It is on-going throughout the whole programme. A lesson will typically follow these lines:

TUTOR *"So you have difficulty counting your change?*

STUDENT *"Yes, I can count my money all right but when I come to the checkout I just can't think fast enough."*

TUTOR *"So what are you trying to do in your head? Give me some examples, what sorts of things do you buy? What did you buy yesterday, for example?*

This provides some useful examples to work on and between us we can remember the prices.

TUTOR *"Would it help if we looked at ways of making quick estimates. The soup costs 24p. Perhaps if you round that off to 20p it would be easier. Bread at 43p can be rounded off to 40p. The baked beans are 19p. Do you think we should call that 10p or 20p?*

STUDENT: *"It is nearer to 20p."*

TUTOR: *"How shall we decide whether to round up or down?"*

We move on to a discussion of the half-way point which denotes whether we round up or down. We are, in fact, working out a mathematical formula for approximating numbers.

At first the student will work on two items of shopping and gradually increase the number as competence and confidence grows.

Counting change may require practice. Discussion will often start around which coin should be offered.

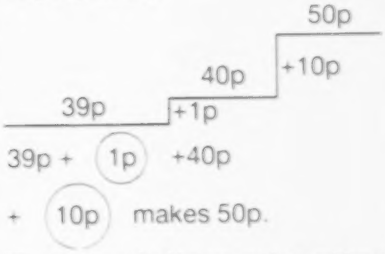
TUTOR: *"The till receipt says 39p. Which coin would you want to offer?"*

It is always worth checking that a student can pick out an appropriate coin and not always resort to handing over £1. We usually empty pockets or purses to help in the decision-making.

STUDENT: *"I have a 50p coin. That would do."*

TUTOR: *"Can we build up from 39p in steps, using coins, to get to 50p?"*

As we are doing this I draw a diagram like the one below with a small step for 1p and a big step for 10p.



We now have the 11p counted out without actually doing a subtraction sum. The student will be familiar with this method already as it is one used by shop assistants in counting out change to customers – another point for discussion.

Utilising existing skills

Jim, a student, was so anxious about number that he gave up even counting his change. Yet, on discussing his daily routine it appeared he had worked out a precise timetable for himself. I wrote it down as he said it.

6.30 a.m. Alarm goes.

7.00 a.m. Leave home in Walker, a district of Newcastle, get to bus-stop for the 7.10 bus.

7.25 a.m. Bus arrives in town centre in time to catch the Metro at 7.30. It takes 15 minutes to get to Hebburn. Work starts at 8.00 a.m. Enough time has been allowed to call in shop for a can of pop for mid-day.

3.30 p.m. Leave work in time to catch Metro at 3.35 going to Byker. Catch the 3.50 at Byker to reach Walker at 4.00 p.m.

4.10 p.m. Leave home to collect newspapers for delivery.

4.30 p.m. Start delivery round.

This allows enough time for a long round so that he can be home to watch "Auf Wiedersehen Pet" on television at 7.30 p.m.

Jim did not associate this detailed time schedule with calculation. It appeared to present no difficulties. This gave a positive starting point. Jim had the skills of adding and subtracting which could be transferred to other areas of his life.

A lot of the times in Jim's timetable were based on round figures of 10's. He was able to approximate and estimate with lengths of time but was not aware that this skill would be useful in counting money which had always appeared to involve precise calculations leading to an exact answer. Most students need to discuss how important an exact answer is and how often we really need one.

George, a student who lives with his two sisters, found difficulty with division. He was sure, however, that if he won £100 he would be able to share it between the three of them.

First of all,

"We'd get £25 each and there would be £25 for the housekeeping."

If the housekeeping did not need that extra boost then,

"Out of the £20 we'd get £5 each and there would be £5 over – a total of £10 still to share. We'd then have another £3 each and the last £1, they (the sisters) could have 50p each."

A neat practical way of dividing. Another example of transferring learnt skills to a new situation. "Quartering" was easier for George than dividing by 3, at least with numbers above 10, and sharing that last few pence was unimportant. This kind of calculation needs to be given value and recognition as it is relevant to the student and achieves an acceptable level of accuracy.

To move on from there the talking may go like this:

TUTOR: *"You managed that division very well. How would you feel now about working out how much money you allow each of you for food every week?"*

We share out the total food bill between three.

The comparisons between this calculation and the last would be drawn before working it out. Perhaps a few similar examples could be done. Then,

"So you can share out money between three of you quite comfortably. How would you feel about scaling down a recipe for six people so that it would work for two of you?" (One sister is often away for long periods.)

Again comparisons with the previous calculations would be drawn before proceeding. Sometimes he may feel that an answer requires more accuracy and perhaps his mental calculation was not adequate. This would open up discussion of appropriate levels of accuracy and how we could use pencil and paper to help achieve them.

Developing a bank of transferrable skills

John and Peter both wanted to learn the "proper" way to calculate. They were keen

STARTING POINT	301	Throw away the 1	300
DARTS THROWN	−32	Take off the 30	270
		Take off the 2	268
SCORE	269	Put back 1	269
	−46	Formal subtraction	
		6 off 9	3
		4 off 6	2
	223		223
	−41	Take off 20	203
		Take off 20	183
	182	Take off 1	182
	−61	Formal subtraction	
		1 off 2	1
		6 off 8	2
	121		121
	−45	Take off 20	101
		Take off 20	81
		Take 5 off 80	75
	76	Put back 1	76

These are the mental calculations carried out

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darts players but had given up as they had not had sufficient practice to keep winning – very important as the loser has to score. We decided to have a game and I was able to observe the many different strategies they applied to their scoring. *(see page 11)*.

This student has a wide range of sophisticated strategies which he could call upon and apply approximately. He was not aware that he was doing this and felt that there must be one "proper" way of going about each subtraction. It came out in the course of conversation that the "proper" way he referred to was formal subtraction. This is a pencil and paper method and is very often inappropriate to mental computation.

There seems to be a widely held view amongst the students I meet that the pencil and paper methods taught in school are the only correct ones.

Many students handicap themselves by trying to use them in mental calculation in situations where approximation and a change of approach would be more helpful.

When adding a column of figures on paper, the rule of adding units first makes sense – but does it make sense when reckoning up in the head? Here it is very often easier to add the tens first and tag on the units after.

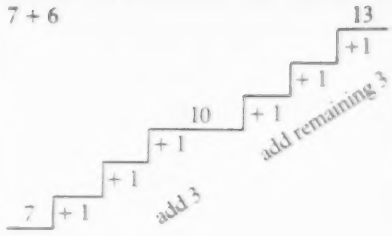
A mistake tends to creep in at the end of a calculation as we try to remember more figures. If it occurs in the units it is minor by comparison with a mistake in the tens.

Jean had difficulty with simple addition and subtraction but said that she could handle money without difficulty. She needed to find a way of transferring her skills to other number work. She worked out her change by adding on until the next 10p as described above.

How could this be developed to aid addition skills?

We looked at some simple additions which would total more than 10.

7 + 6



7 and 3 takes you to 10.
There is still another 3 to go;
add that to 10 to make 13.

(To do this successfully a student needs to know the composition of numbers 1 to 9).

We looked at the composition of 10.

1 + 9	Knowledge of the part in the box is
2 + 8	essential. It is repeated in the second
3 + 7	part so the amount to be learnt is
4 + 6	almost halved.
5 + 5	Jean realised that she knew these
6 + 4	number bonds anyway as she used
7 + 3	them so often in counting money.
8 + 2	Once she saw that she could use the
9 + 1	same method for any addition she progressed rapidly.

We looked at 17 + 6 and 27 + 6 and found that pattern to be the same.

17 + 3 makes 20, add on the remaining 3 to make 23.

27 + 3 makes 30, add on the remaining 3 to make 33.

We tried to adapt the method for subtraction. To Jean it was very similar to counting change.

In the case of 15 − 6 we turned the figures round to start with 6.

6 + (4) = 10, another (5) added makes 15

4 + 5 = 9

It was apparent that Jean, like so many students, felt comfortable with addition but subtraction made her feel uneasy and unsure of performing correctly. This translation into addition gave her more confidence.

One important part of the conversation in a lesson will be about developing quick and easy computation skills. I suggest to students that they use "dead time" for practising. "Dead time" is the time spent sitting on a bus, waiting in a queue or doing a routine job, such as washing up, which does not require much thought.

There are two exercises we find particularly useful.

1. Doubling up.

This means taking any number then doubling it and redoubling for as long as possible.

It is a great help to "multiplication". Tables can be grouped in families:

"2 times", "4 times" and "8 times" can be achieved by doubling.

e.g. to find 8 × 7

$$\frac{2\times7}{7+7} = 14 \quad \frac{4\times7}{14+14} = 28 \quad \frac{8\times7}{28+28} = 56$$

"3 times" and "6 times", even "12 times", form another family.

e.g. to find 6 × 7

$$\frac{3\times7}{7+7} = 14 \quad \frac{6+7}{21+21} = 42$$

if required $14 + 6 = 20$

$20 + 1 = 21$

2. Repeated addition

Start with any number and repeatedly add a chosen number to it.

eg.

[6] + 6 = 12

3 + [4] = 7

12 + 6 = 18

7 + 4 = 11

18 + 6 = 24

11 + 4 = 15

There are many ways of reaching the required answer to a multiplication. Students who have never learnt tables are often very adept at these tasks and can pass hints on to others. Many can manage "5 times" a number and use that as starting point, working upwards or downwards to the number required.

e.g. to find 7 × 7

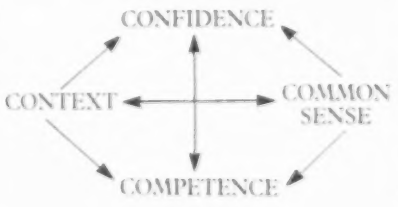
5 × 7 = 35

35 + 7 = 42, 42 + 7 = 49

Finally . . .

To achieve "mind over maths" we need 4 C's.

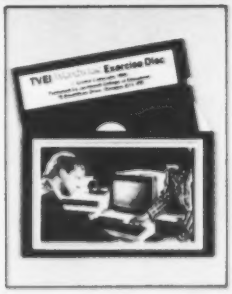
First and foremost CONFIDENCE, then seeing problems in the CONTEXT of our own lives and removing the restrictions of formal methods so that we can tackle them in a COMMON SENSE way which will lead to COMPETENCE.



REVIEWS

Microcomputer Review

WordPlus Questionnaire



by Jacquetta Megarry and Eric Deason

Published by Jordanhill College of Education, 76, Southbrae Drive, Glasgow, G13 1PP

Price £9.00

Micro: BBC Model B, B Plus or Master, fitted with Wordwise Plus

Disc: supplied on 40-track

Questionnaire turns the Wordwise Plus wordprocessor into a program which allows you to write and present questionnaires, and store, collate, and analyse the answers from the "sitters" who complete them. The close link with Wordwise Plus makes editing and printing out the questionnaires a very simple matter.

The value of Questionnaire is as a facilitator, in addition to giving students experience in information technology. It provides the means to do large-scale surveys with the minimum of fuss. Thus the program could form the basis for project work involving finding a suitable topic, devising lots of questions and answers on the topic and selecting the best ones, typing the questions and answers into the program, asking people to complete the questionnaire, then collating the results (the program does this for you) and analysing them. This could lead to discussion, report-writing, or drawing pie- or bar-charts of the results (which could be done with a program like Mini-Office II).

It is unfortunate that the program expects to be told each sitter's name, as many people would be reluctant to have their names stored on disc along with their answers, especially if the questionnaire deals with a sensitive subject. You can enter gobbledegook instead, but it would be preferable to have the option to bypass the name-entry routine.

However, despite this quibble, Questionnaire could be used for a variety of interesting surveys, and students will certainly enjoy making questionnaires as much as answering them!

Janet Leonard
Project Co-ordinator
ALBSU Special Development Project in Computer-assisted Learning

Finding Out About Retailing
Finding Out About Nuclear Energy
Finding Out About Smoking

by Various Authors

Published by Hobson Publishing PLC

ISBN's — 0 86021 916X
0 86021 792 2
0 86021 793 0

Prices: — ***£2.95***
95p
£1.25

These books are part of a series written to provide students with a collection of resource materials, giving them a knowledge of the many issues they may need to consider today. Although short, the books are colourful and informative with plenty of photographs, charts and drawings. The language is fairly complex and technical at times, and it soon becomes obvious that the books are written for the secondary school age. Whilst some of the puzzles in 'Retailing' are fun the 'Things To Do' and 'What You Can Do' sections are decidedly school orientated, although a clever tutor could adapt some of the ideas to provoke a lively group discussion. It is very debatable just how many ABE tutors would have access to the equipment needed to set up the experiment in the 'Smoking' book, not to mention the stringent 'No Smoking in the teaching rooms' rule that exists in most schools and colleges where the majority of of ABE teaching takes place.

I tried these books out with both ABE students and YTS trainees and once the initial enthusiasm had worn off the general comments were "it's O.K.", "not bad", "quite interesting I suppose" but nobody really wanted to give the books a second look. The YTS trainees were perhaps a little more enthusiastic but felt they had seen and used better resources. All students totally rejected the 'Nuclear Energy' book stating it was "of no interest" and the words were "too hard", conversely my 14 year-old son read it from cover to cover and pronounced it to be "very interesting".

A resource which might prove useful in providing topics for group discussion, but not one that I would put on my scheme shelf.

Gill Charles
ABE Tutor/Organiser
Lincolnshire Education Authority

Basic Skills: English

by Paul Groves & Nigel Grimshaw

Published by John Murray Ltd., 50 Albemarle Street, London W1X 4BD

Students' Book:

ISBN 07195 4350 9

Price: £2.95

Teachers' Resource Book: ISBN 07195 43517

Price: £7.50

"Basic Skills: English" consists of a students' book and Teachers' Resource book. We were pleased to see such excellent material covering everyday English/Communication Skills. The books are reassuringly small in volume and use a clear, interesting and varied presentation. The skills covered are based on the requirements of the A.E.B. Basic English Course. They are also suitable for City & Guilds Communication Level 1 course work.

The work is closely related to work and social life. It seems very suitable for the young adult, although we felt that the material was appropriate for a wide age range. We did however regret the reference throughout to "Teacher".

The topics covered include form filling, taking notes and messages, formal and informal letter writing, following and making instructions, telephoning and understanding tabular information. The A4 size Teachers' Resource Book has useful dictation passages, worksheets (copyright waived) and test paper answers for self correction if required.

We felt that a capable reader could work through the material on their own apart from the listening skills section, although if necessary this could be set up ready on a tape recorder. Interaction between a student and tutor is of course valuable, and the books do provide an opportunity for some good discussion. We both agreed that these pleasant, well

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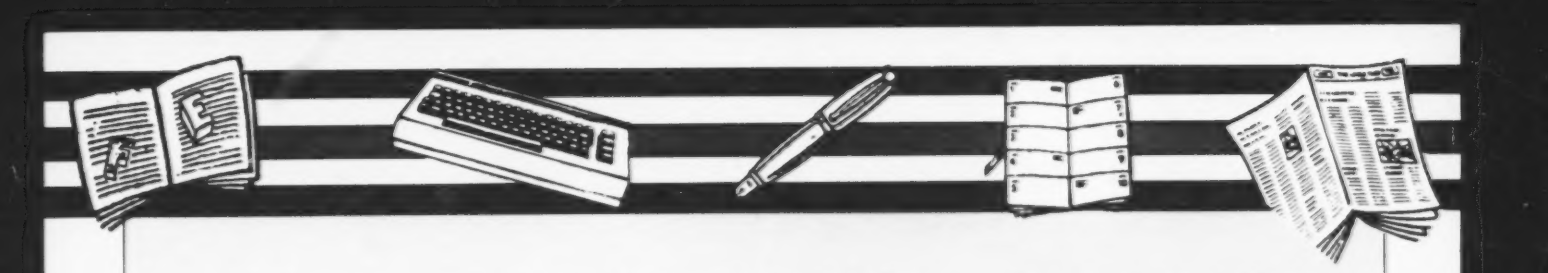

thought out and structured books would be an asset to any Adult Basic Education Scheme. We look forward to using them straight away.

June Lewis, Gill Wilson
A.B.E. Staff Tutors
Shropshire Education Authority

The Alpha Series

The Sound of Music:
Maria Von Trapp
ISBN 0 19 424 157 2

Alive: Piers Paul Read
ISBN 0 19 424 256 2

The Big Sleep: Raymond Chandler
ISBN 0 19 434 221 8

Wuthering Heights: Emily Bronte
ISBN 0 19 434 186 6

The Man Who Fell to Earth:
Walter Tevis
ISBN 1 19 424 315

Published by Oxford University Press

Price £1.10 each

A set of simplified texts, adapting a range of popular novels for 'The Student of English'.

These books, presumably intended for ESL or EFL readers, are attractively presented paperbacks, very reasonably priced, and, even in their simplified form, offer a good read.

The titles include thrillers, science fiction and the more popular 'classics' and are graded on 1000 or 1500 'headword level'.

The titles have been "selected for adaption on the strength of their plot and the quality of their writing", and the adaptors have certainly succeeded in the difficult task of maintaining elements of the style of the originals. Hence, the uneven quality of the originals is reflected in these texts. Our readers found 'The Sound of Music' to be straightforward to the point of being prosaic while 'The Big Sleep' is pacey and vivid: "The orchids filled the place. They had large meaty leaves and roots like the newly washed fingers of dead men". The language and atmosphere of 'Wuthering Heights' are close to the original, while obvious areas of difficulty, such as the use of dialect are omitted.

We read these novels with ABE students in mind, and we certainly feel that they have a place as part of ABE reading resources. They would be most suitable for proficient but not habitual readers. The plots move along at a good pace, and the length of the texts would not be too overfacing. Moreover, they look like 'real' books.

It would need to be explained to ABE students, however, that the glossary at the end of each book is intended for people whose first language is not English. Otherwise, explanations such as "swear – to use bad words" would seem very patronising.

Overall, we felt that novels presented in this form could be a useful and popular resource, suitable either for individual or small group reading.

J P Holgate: Head of Department and tutors of the Community Education Department
Swinton Adult Education Centre
Salford Education Authority

The Survivor
Ways of Learning

by Florence Agbah

Published by Printing & Publishing Unit for Continuing Education, 27 Harrogate Rd, Leeds LS7 3PD

Price £1.50 and £1.35

Florence Agbah was born in Ghana and has written two books about her "philosophy" of life.

The first: "The Survivor" is a very sad story about the author's great desire to go to school and she feels because of this urge her brother and sister were killed in a road accident. She always carried the blame for this, but also felt sustained by her father's love.

The second book: "Ways of Learning" is about her life in Britain since 1966 and it describes the difficulties she encountered learning English.

These two books have been shown to a variety of groups of students with mixed receptions. In an evening class some more able readers enjoyed them and they provoked interesting discussion. They found they could identify with parts of the second one: ie, difficulty with learning English. Students who were beginning readers found them difficult to use contextual clues. Some said: "What an odd story."

Others also found them difficult to understand, while others disagreed with her "philosophy" – "the only way you can get that is by being soft, by making yourself low" – they felt there were different ways. In each case good discussion took place on – feelings, guilt or childhood.

Muriel Aplin
Adult Basic Education Tutor/Organiser
Swindon College
Wiltshire Education Authority

Developing Oral Skills

by Greg Brooks, John Latham and Anne Rex

Published by Heinemann Educational Books

ISBN 0 435 10109 9

Price £25.75

'Developing Oral Skills' is a resource pack designed for the teaching of oral communication at secondary school level. It is aimed at providing teachers with a framework for developing oral competence in preparation for the new GCSE English oral exam at age 16.

The pack is made up of fifteen sections of lesson materials clearly set out on loose worksheets and bound together in an attractive A4 ring file. Twelve of the sections contain activities relating to the twelve main purposes for talk eg. describing, instructing, narrating, informing, etc.

The material in each section is well structured, listing the aims, equipment, time and running instructions for all activities. Suggestions are also given for further developments, all designed to evoke that particular variety of talk. The texts for aural comprehension are recorded on an accompanying cassette tape.

The best three sections are complementry but organised differently. More ideas are outlined to encourage active listening and further topics are suggested for prepared talks and short oral activities.

'Developing Oral Skills' is certainly a well-structured and comprehensive pack. It is a useful and practical resource for both Communication Skills tutors and those looking for new ideas to stimulate more oral work in their groups. Its clear layout and photocopiable worksheets make it attractive and easily accessible.

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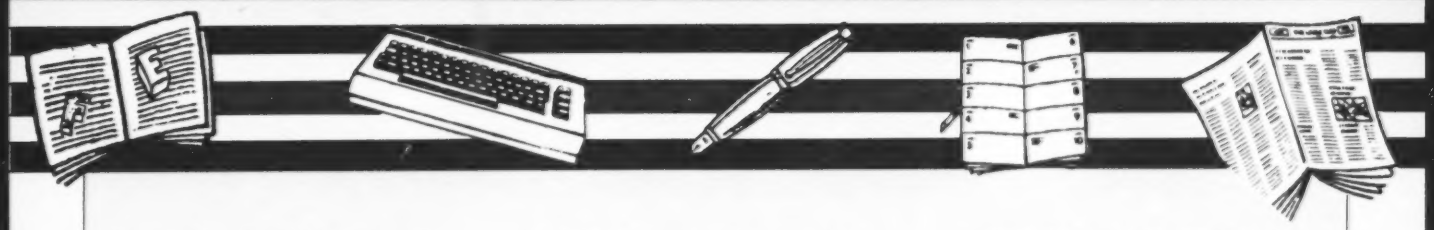

Because the material is specifically geared to oral work, students of all abilities can participate. Its only limitation is that it is designed for the secondary age range. Although most activities are suitable for adult students, some ideas need to be adapted to allow for age and social differences.

Phoebe Emond
ABE tutor
Avon Education Authority

Communication at Work

by Alan Jamieson

Published by Edward Arnold

ISBN 0 7131 7368 8

Price £2.95

With this book students can explore the processes and practice of different forms of communication at work and in daily life. Introducing the general idea of communication very clearly, the book goes on to look at needs, attitudes and perceptions when sending/receiving any communication. Various topics are then examined under the headings Looking, Speaking, Listening and Interviewing, Reading and Finding out, Writing Processes, Writing Techniques and Visual Communication.

The ideas in the book are clear and well presented, each chapter incorporates short exercises within the text that aim to help students to explore various ways of communicating and their effectiveness. There are useful guidelines for everything from being aware of body language to writing your own C.V.

The personal style used throughout talks directly to the reader and always refers to experiences that are likely to be encountered at work or on training courses. This approach and the liberal use of humourous examples, cartoons and other illustrations helps to offset the slightly daunting impression created by the close print/two column format. If the style is generally 'user friendly', the layout is occasionally irritating. It is not helpful to have a map on one page and the associated exercise overleaf!

This book is essentially for individual use although some of the topics would make interesting group work. It is definitely not for anyone with any reading difficulties. The author states that the book is "closely tied to the skills needed by young people entering YTS or FE courses or their first real job". For this target group I feel that the book has plenty of good ideas, practical guidance and useful exercises and it encourages independent thought and action.

Margaret Dawson
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Portsmouth ABE
Hampshire Education Authority

Understanding Dyslexia

by T R Miles

Published by Better Books

ISBN 0 904 700 47X

Price £5.50 (incl. pp.)

This is a new (1987) edition of a book originally published in 1978. Professor Miles has written a clear, sympathetic and easy to read account of the difficulties experienced by dyslexics, ways of recognising dyslexia, and the issues involved in providing appropriate teaching for dyslexics.

Rather than rewriting the book, Professor Miles has supplemented some of the chapters with additional material and added a new chapter on recent developments, briefly mentioning the implications of recent research. Although the book is primarily concerned with children, he includes 'case studies' of older adolescents and young adults and gives from insight into the kinds of problems which persist for the dyslexic into adulthood and the kinds of difficulties they face in higher education.

When he comes to discuss teaching, however, Professor Miles' guidelines are unlikely to be of much use to the tutor of adults. Although he points out the importance of a multi-sensory approach in teaching dyslexics, he does not suggest in any detail how this might be done with adults. He also stresses the use of a structured phonics programme, which is rarely either appropriate for or effective with adult dyslexics, particularly those with difficulties in discriminating sounds.

This book is probably most useful, aside from the case studies, for those who want a fairly simple and straightforward guide to determining whether a student may be dyslexic and the general nature of the problems the student is likely to have, although even here I have some reservations as he puts perhaps too much emphasis on such symptoms as confusions between b and d. The pattern he describes is more that of a 'visual' dyslexic and does not cover as wide a spectrum of difficulties as it might. Nevertheless, this is an accessible introduction to dyslexia.

Cynthia Klein
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Inner London Education Authority

Talking Matters

by Hilary Caminer and Deborah Catesby

Published by Hodder and Stoughton Educational

ISBN 0 340 38623 1

Price £3.95 – Students' Book

ISBN 0 340 39073 5

Price £9.00 Cassette

This book and cassette tape set is described as "A Practical Guide to Speaking and Listening". Each chapter contains information, exercises and suggestions for further work related to a particular talking or listening skill. It is intended to encourage students to practice speaking for themselves. The text is clear and the cartoon-type illustrations are amusing but the text book style and bold numbering of the paragraphs may make it a little off-putting for adults. Although intended for use by College students, much of the work is suitable for use with adults. The cassette includes various illustrations and real life recordings and is an integral part of many of the exercises.

Several sections of the book and cassette tape have been used with a group of adults working towards an R.S.A. Certificate of Continuing Education. One requirement of this

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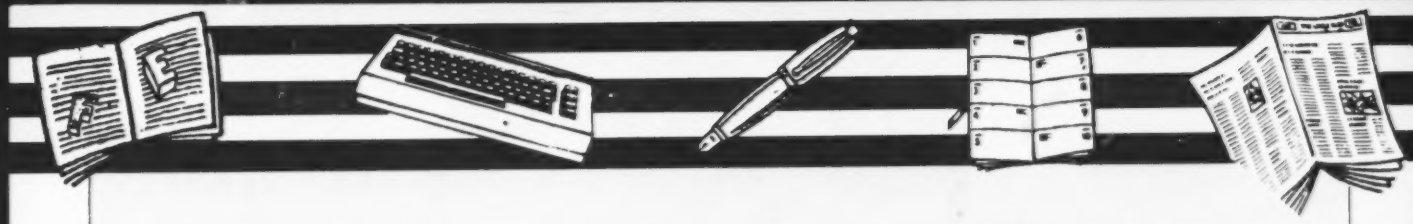

course is that students should develop their talking skills and this set is proving a helpful resource for this. The most useful chapters have been "Putting Your Case" and "Under Discussion". Many adults who lack confidence find it difficult to think through why and how they feel about issues and to express this to others. Various exercises in these chapters, e.g. 'Making a complaint', 'Fact or Opinion', 'Coping with Insults' and 'Bias and Prejudice' provide good starting points for discussion.

Generally this is a good book to use as a source of ideas and exercises for stimulating thinking, discussion and practical oral skills.

Allette Garnett (with tutors and students)
ABE Area Organiser (East Riding South)
Humberside Education Authority

Remembering In Groups: ideas from reminiscence and literacy work

by Jane Lawrence and Jane Mace

Published by Exploring Living Memory, with the Oral History Society 1987.

Price £1.50 plus 50p postage per copy

available from: Oral History Society, c/o London History Workshop Centre, 42 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AJ

This A4, spiral bound booklet (38 pp) provides a clear description of exactly what reminiscence work is, and how it can be done. An easy and enjoyable book to read; Jane Mace and Jane Lawrence draw upon their considerable experience as adult literacy tutors to share the process, pleasures and difficulties of this particular form of group work.

The booklet is divided into two sections; in the first they define and discuss the purpose and value of "remembering in a group", looking carefully at the differences between a spoken and written story, between "recollecting" and "recalling" and between reminiscence work and oral history. Each area provides thought-provoking ideas for any ABE tutor.

The second section concentrates on the practical: how to get it going. It is full of excellent advice, generously shared; including a number of exercises, games and ideas of interest to tutors who may wish to encourage discussion or focussed listening in their groups or to foster pleasure in story telling for its own sake.

The authors are at pains to stress that publication is not the major purpose of reminiscence work, although they do offer some helpful advice on transferring spoken memories into written or pictorial form.

The emphasis throughout is upon process rather than product, which is why this booklet is an excellent resources for anyone interested in facilitating "remembering in a group", whether as a one-off session, a short course or a major project.

Jill Harris
Assistant County Co-ordinator
Dorset Education Authority

A Life-skills Manual: Personal Safety

by Judith Robertson

Published by the Winslow Press

Price £14.95

ISBN 0 86388 061 4

Judith Robertson has done a thoroughly professional job with her manual on Personal Safety. Comprehensive in range and practical in approach, its flexibility makes it a valuable resource for a wide variety of groups as well as for its intended use in rehabilitation programmes.

The information, for the most part in straightforward and jargon-free language, ranges from facts about the use of gas and electricity in the home to emotionally highly-charged topics like sexual harrassment and child-abuse. The teaching strategies suggested in each chapter are generally helpful, but it is not always made clear that, especially in these more personal situations, they would need careful treatment. Some role-play suggestions in particular, unless led by experienced and sensitive tutors, might prove disturbing.

The layout and organisation of the manual, both overall and within the chapters, makes it easy to assess the scope of each topic, identify particular points and cross-refer. Section Four is a resource guide in the form of useful addresses, cross-referenced by chapter and topic. This section is central to the way the manual is designed to be used: to provide basic facts as a starting-point for further exploration, and as an element in a wider programme of preparation for independent living.

A tiny niggle: with all that space available, and at that price too, why is there only one illustration?

Brian Grimshaw
Community Education Resources Development Officer
Community Education Development Unit, Manchester Education Authority

Also received

Steps in Understanding, Books 1 and 2

by Mike Hamlin

Published by Hutchinson

Price £3.50 each

ISBN 0 09 167971 0 and 0 09 170 170791 9

The ALBSU Newsletter is published four times a year, in November, February, May and July. Copies are available, free, to organisations and individuals. We aim to publish articles of interest to those teaching in adult literacy, second language and basic skills, those who are responsible for funding and organising the provision, and those who are generally interested in these important areas of work.

If you have ideas on topics which you would like to see covered, please contact the Editor, at ALBSU. Reviews of relevant publications are written for the newsletter by practitioners, and we are interested to receive publications which could be useful in basic education.

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